

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



September 2013

Vol. 118, No. 9

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THE ROAD TO WISDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON *Work Without Motive 1*

WHEN the Gita was first preached, there was then going on a great controversy between two sects. One party considered the Vedic Yajnas and animal sacrifices and such like Karmas to constitute the whole of religion. The other preached that the killing of numberless horses and cattle cannot be called religion. The people belonging to the latter party were mostly Sannyasins and followers of Jnana. They believed that the giving up of all work and the gaining of the knowledge of the Self was the only path to Moksha. By the preaching of His great doctrine of work without motive, the Author of the Gita set at rest the disputes of these two antagonistic sects.

Many are of opinion that the Gita was not written at the time of the Mahabharata, but was subsequently added to it. This is not correct. The special teachings of the Gita are to be found in every part of the Mahabharata, and if the Gita is to be expunged, as forming no part of it, every other portion of it which embodies the same teachings should be similarly treated.

Now, what is the meaning of working without motive? Nowadays many understand it in the sense that one is to work in such a way that neither pleasure nor pain touches his mind. If this be its real meaning, then the animals might be said to work without motive. Some animals devour their own



offspring, and they do not feel any pangs at all in doing so. ...If the meaning of it be such, then one who has a stony heart, the worst of criminals, might be considered to be working without motive. ... In the above sense the doctrine is a potent instrument in the hands of the wicked. They would go on doing wicked deeds, and would pronounce themselves as working without a motive. If such be the significance of working without a motive, then a fearful doctrine has been put forth by the preaching of the Gita. Certainly this is not the meaning. Furthermore, if we look into the lives of those who were connected with the preaching of the Gita, we should find them living quite a different life. Arjuna killed Bhishma and Drona in battle, but withal, he sacrificed all his self-interest and desires and his lower self millions of times.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 5.246-47.



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Amrita Kalasha

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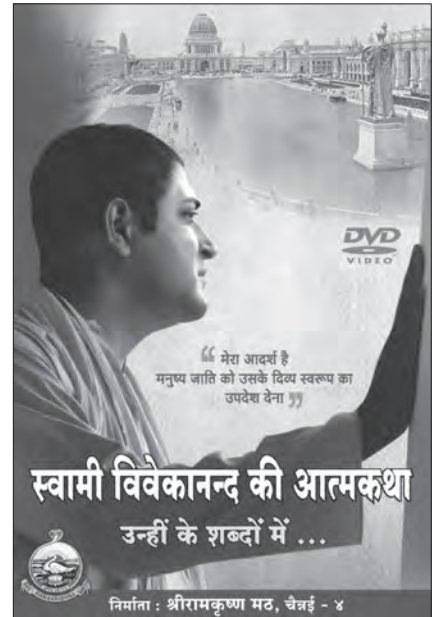
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—A compilation

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Light of all Lights

September 2013

Vol. 118, No. 9

आविः संनिहितं गुहाचरं नाम महत्पदमत्रैतत् समर्पितम् ।

एजत्प्राणन्निमिषच्च यदेतज्ज्ञानथ सदसद्वरेण्यं परं विज्ञानाद्यद्वरिष्ठं प्रजानाम् ॥

(Brahman is) effulgent, near, well-known as moving in the heart, and is the great goal. On It are fixed all these that move, breathe, wink, or do not wink. Know this One, which comprises the gross and the subtle, which is beyond the ordinary knowledge of creatures, and which is most desirable and highest of all.

(Mundaka Upanishad, 2.2.1)

तस्मिञ्छुक्लमुत नीलमाहुः पिङ्गलं हरितं लोहितं च ।

एष पन्था ब्रह्मणा हानुवित्तः तेनैति ब्रह्मवित्पुण्यकृत्तैजसश्च ॥

Some speak of it as white, others as blue, grey, green, or red. This path is realized by a Brahmana (knower of Brahman). Any other knower of Brahman who has done good deeds and is identified with the supreme Light (also) treads this path.

(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 4.4.9)

आर्द्रं ज्वलतिज्योतिरहमस्मि । ज्योतिर्ज्वलति ब्रह्माहमस्मि । योऽहमस्मि

ब्रह्माहमस्मि । अहमस्मि ब्रह्माहमस्मि । अहमेवाहं मां जुहोमि स्वाहा ॥

I am that supreme Light that projected itself as the universe, like a soaked seed that sprouts (or I am that supreme Light that shines as the substratum of the liquid element). I am that supreme Light of Brahman that shines (as the essence of all that exists). I am Brahman even when I am experiencing myself as a finite self owing to ignorance. Now, by the onset of knowledge, I am really that Brahman, which is my eternal nature. Therefore, I realize this identity by making the finite self an oblation into the fire of Brahman, which I am always. Svaha.

(Mahanarayana Upanishad, 1.67)

THIS MONTH

Consciousness is tinged with desires, but with **The Extinction of Desire** consciousness becomes pure and realizes its supreme nature, which is beyond maya.



The identification of Sri Sarada Devi with different goddesses and mythological or historical characters captivates her devotees' minds. **'I am Radha'** focuses that identification on the eternal companion of Sri Krishna. The author, Dr Rudrani Mukherjee, is a research scholar at the Indian Institute of Psychometry, Kolkata.

The concept of secularism in India, which has religion as its centre, differs from ordinary ideas of secularism. This is highlighted by Dr Aditya Kumar Gupta in **Indian Secularism and Swami Vivekananda**. The author is Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Zakir Husain Delhi College, New Delhi.

Swami Chetanananda, Minister-in-charge, Vedanta Society of St Louis, in **An Imaginary Interview with Sri Ramakrishna** creatively and humorously interviews Sri Ramakrishna on his life and times, like a modern-day reporter.

Bhakti is a powerful sadhana to realize God. **The Yoga of Divine Love** is studied through Sri Aurobindo's philosophy by Dr K V Raghupathi, Sr Assistant Professor in English, Central University of Tamil Nadu.



The world has become increasingly less inclined towards gratefulness, making human relationships difficult. Prof. Vijaya Kumar Murty, chair of the Department of Mathematics, University of Toronto, speaks of how **Thankfulness and Appreciation** can change our lives.



People, especially theologians, have been trying to understand the nature of evil. In **The Discussion of Evil in Christianity**, Subhasis Chattopadhyay, Assistant Professor of English, Ramananda College, Bishnupur, reviews different

Christian explanations of evil.

In the twelfth part of **Eternal Words**, Swami Adbhutananda continues speaking about an ideal life, this time with emphasis on monastic and householder's obligations. The swami's words are translated from *Sat Katha*, published by Udbodhan Office, Kolkata.



The fifteenth instalment of **Svarajya Siddhibh: Attaining Self-dominion** by the eighteenth century Gangadharendra Saraswati, fifteenth pontiff of Kanchi Kamakoti Pitham, Kanchipuram, explains the concept of *purusha* and dismisses the stand of Sankhya philosophy about *pradhana* as the cause of creation.

The Extinction of Desire

THERE ARE TWO FEATURES in consciousness: internal and external. These features make the personality of every individual. The internal is the deeper layer of the mind, which is driven by desires and is the basis of the external. The *Manu Smriti* says: '*Yadyad-bi kurute kinchit-tattat kamasya cheshtitam*; whatever activity is undertaken (by beings) is the movement of desires.' There is a third feature in our personalities and that is the self. 'The self', as the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* teaches, 'is identified with desire alone. What it desires, it resolves; what it resolves, it works out; and what it works out, it attains.' The self is identified with desire because it rises at the beginning of creation. The 'Nasadiya Sukta' of the Rig Veda declares: 'At first in darkness hidden darkness lay, / Undistinguished as one mass of water, / Then *That* which lay in void thus covered / A glory did put forth by *Tapah*! First desire rose, the primal seed of mind, / (The sages have seen all this in their hearts / Sifting existence from non-existence.) Its rays above, below and sideways spread.'

This primal desire, from which the mind rises, takes various forms, and what we see around in creation is its display, manifestation, and variety. Just as desire has taken various forms, there are also various levels of desires. The desire to live is the strongest of all desires. It gives rise to other desires and is the node from which stretches the mighty network of existence known to us. A tree, for instance, in order to protect and propagate itself, produces a variety of mechanisms like size,

strength, place, colourful flowers, and odour to attract pollinators. Thus desire drives the evolution of all species. The senses of all beings, through which additional desires pour in, are designed to experience and become inflamed with the world of colour, sound, taste, smell, and touch.

Every desire gives rise, after each experience, to fresh desires. In the Bhagavata King Yayati learns that 'desire is never satisfied by enjoying desire; it only increases as fire when butter is poured upon it'. Desire and its derivatives such as anger, greed, hate, jealousy, and so forth holds the whole world in its vice-like grip. Besides, desire also brings in exhaustion, grief, diseases, insanity, and other similar troubles in its train.

No conscious being can live alone. Each one depends on another, which in turn depends on another, and so on in an infinite chain of bondage. Desires invariably seek fulfilment and satisfaction. When we seek enjoyment, we become objects of enjoyment for others. Desire thus enfolds both the subject and the object in its ambit, uses and wears both down. Swami Vivekananda says it beautifully: 'We came here to sip the honey, and we find our hands and feet sticking to it. We are caught, though we came to catch. We came to enjoy; we are being enjoyed. We came to rule; we are being ruled. We came to work; we are being worked. All the time, we find that. And this comes into every detail of our life. We are being worked upon by other minds, and we are always struggling to work on other minds. We want to enjoy the pleasures of life; and they eat into our vitals. We want to get everything from

nature, but we find in the long run that nature takes everything from us—depletes us, and casts us aside.’ Desire binds us to the world; in fact, it is the world. That is why Sri Ramakrishna says: ‘Lust and gold is maya.’

In this world of duality or relativity desires take the form of good and bad. There is, however, one form that is considered extremely good, and that is the desire to seek God, to get liberated from this world of maya. This desire comes only when one can renounce lower desires. The more this process of renunciation takes place, the greater the dimensions of the personality open up. One then becomes more controlled, calm, and intelligent. Desires are controlled by desires; higher desires control lower desires. The *Yoga Sutra* says: ‘To obstruct thoughts that are inimical to yoga, contrary thoughts should be brought in.’ To seek others’ welfare and become unselfish and feel for others are good desires. Another method to control desires is not letting the mind dwell on sick imaginations. When we imagine enjoyable things, desires become stronger, and when they are not fulfilled, they make us nervous and emotional wrecks. The Mahabharata says: ‘O Desire, I know your roots, you rise from imagination; I will not imagine and hence shall destroy you with your root.’

The Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi says: ‘From desire this body comes into being. When there is no desire at all, the body falls away. With complete cessation of desire there comes the final end.’ ‘As long as a man has desires there will be no end to his transmigration. It is the desire alone that makes him take one body after another. Rebirth is inevitable so long as one has desires.’ Sri Ramakrishna also says: ‘God cannot be realized if there is the slightest attachment to the things of the world. A thread cannot pass through the eye of a needle if the tiniest fibre sticks out.’

The idea is to get beyond desires, and the only way one can do this is by not getting identified with the mind but with the Atman. The self, which is but a reflection of the Atman, became foolishly identified with the mind. Desires are very powerful and one has to be careful and slowly disassociate oneself from them, as explained by a mantra of the *Mahanarayana Upanishad*: ‘Salutations to the gods. Desire performed the act. Desire did the act. Desire is doing the act, not I. Desire is the agent, not I. Desire causes the doer to act, not I. O Desire, fascinating in form, let this oblation be offered to thee. Svaha!’

One can also meditate on God, who is by nature eternal, pure, and free to overcome maya. Another way is, as the *Yoga Sutra* says: ‘(By meditation on) the heart that has given up all attachment to sense-objects.’ This is the reason why God descends as an avatara to show humanity the way out of the network of desires and wants. Swamiji, in Varanasi, once had a discussion with the renowned monk Swami Bhaskarananda, who said to him: ‘No one can completely renounce lust and gold.’ Swamiji then animatedly defended his Master’s life, his own aspiration, and the ideals of purity spoken by the scriptures. Struck by Swamiji’s fire and eloquence Bhaskarananda turned to his disciples and those present saying: ‘This man has Saraswati (the Goddess of Learning) on his tongue. His mind is like a great light.’ Swamiji, fuming, left the place and for the rest of his short life he preached the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna as the new ideal for the world sunk in worldliness. Holding on to this ideal we can build a personality based on spirituality and, as the *Katha Upanishad* declares, ‘When all desires clinging to one’s heart fall off, then a mortal becomes immortal (and) attains Brahman here.’



'I am Radha'

Dr Rudrani Mukherjee

IT IS DIFFICULT TO truly understand Sri Sarada Devi, the consort of Sri Ramakrishna. Speaking about himself, Sri Ramakrishna declared: 'He who was Rama, He who was Krishna, He Himself is now Ramakrishna in this body.'¹ A swami asked Sri Sarada Devi: "If the Master is God Himself, who are you then?" Without the least hesitation the Mother replied, "Who else should I be? I, too, am the Divine Mother."²

Sankhya philosophy teaches us that Purusha and Prakriti coexist in creation as the male and female principles. Sri Ramakrishna, while describing the conjoint images of Sri Radha and Sri Krishna explained: 'Sri Krishna has a peacock feather on His crest. The feather bears the sign of the female sex. The significance of this is that Krishna carries Prakriti, the female principle, on His head.'³

Incomparable their beauty,
and limitless their love!
The one half shines like yellow gold,
the other like bluest sapphire;
Round the neck, on one side,
a wild-flower garland hangs,
And, on the other, there swings
a necklace of precious gems.
A ring of gold adorns one ear,
a ring of shell the other;
Half of the brow is bright
as the blazing midday sun,
The other softly gleams with
the glow of the rising moon.
Upon one half of the head
a graceful peacock feather stands,
And, from the other half,
there hangs a braid of hair (212).



The way Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi conducted their lives in this world is in stark contrast to that of Sri Krishna and Sri Radha. However, one does obtain rare glimpses into their unique and divine love.

Mother's Various Forms

Sri Ramakrishna worshipped Sri Sarada Devi as the goddess Tripura Sundari Shodashi—one of the ten forms of the Divine Mother.⁴ He said of her: 'She (Mother) is Sarada, Saraswati; she has come to impart knowledge.'⁵ More than once Sri Ramakrishna admitted that the Holy Mother was his power. As fire and its burning power are one, so are the Master and the Holy Mother. He also said: 'She has descended by covering up her beauty this time, lest unregenerate people should come to grief by looking at her with impure eyes' (ibid.). The great Swami Vivekananda looked upon her as Durga; he said: 'Brother, I shall demonstrate the worship of the living Durga, and then shall my name be true' (116). Swami Shivananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, asserted: 'It is She alone who, by Her grace, removes our ignorance and bestows knowledge and devotion.'⁶

Exuding wonderful charms the Holy Mother would treat everyone with honour and deference. She was neither extravagant nor parsimonious, and her devotion to Sri Ramakrishna was unparalleled. Many devotees prostrated themselves at her feet saying: 'You are Lakshmi, you are the Mother of the Universe.'⁷ And then she would just smile or keep silent; there was no trace of egoism in her. A village watchman in Jayrambati asked her: "People call you goddess, deity, and what not; as for us, we understand nothing of that." The Mother said, "Why need you understand? You are my brother Ambika and I am your sister Sarada" (436).

Once her nephew Sivaram, while accompanying her from Kamarpukur to Jayrambati,

stopped and asked her: "Will you tell me who you are?" ... "Who should I be? I am your aunt," pleaded the Mother. ... Finding Sivaram still standing, the Mother said at last, "People say, I am Kali." To be doubly sure Sivaram asked, "Kali? Truly so?" The Mother said, "Yes" (430). A devotee who had heard that Mother was 'Kali Herself, the Primal Energy, the Deity' (439) asked her if this was true. 'The Mother said, "Yes, it is so"' (ibid.).

A devotee declared: "Mother, nobody will care for the goddesses Shasthi, Sitala, etc., after you." The Mother replied, "Why should they not? They are only my own parts" (441). She concealed herself so well that not even Nalini, her niece, could fathom her. Once 'Nalini Devi asked the Mother before two women disciples: "Well, aunt, people call you the Indwelling Entity; are you really so?" The Mother only smiled a little' (437). At times she did give herself away with statements such as: 'I am deathless' (436).

At one time, miffed at one of her relatives for their misconduct, she said: 'I warn you, don't molest me too much. If the being that is within this body should once raise its hood, then not even Brahma, Vishnu, or Maheshwara will have the power to save you' (437). Sri Ramakrishna had also warned his nephew Hriday to watch his tongue while speaking harshly to the Holy Mother, otherwise 'even Brahma, Vishnu, or Maheshwara cannot save you' (66).

While at Bangalore the Holy Mother climbed a small hillock behind the ashrama and sat on the top to watch the setting sun. When Swami Ramakrishnananda heard about it, he said that Mother is Paravatavasini, a name of Durga. He ran up the hillock and 'laying his head on her feet chanted the three well-known verses of the *Chandi* beginning with *Sarva-mangala-mangalye* which are used as *mantras* for the salutations of the Divine Mother' (248).

Sri Ramakrishna, in one of his visions, saw Sri Sita wearing a blue sari and having gold bangles on her wrists. He had such a pair of bangles made for the Holy Mother. He also said they were the same as Sri Rama and Sri Sita. At Rameshwaram, on seeing the uncovered Shiva linga during worship, the Holy Mother remembered her life as Sri Sita and soliloquized: 'It is just as I had left it' (245). A devotee thought that just as there is a unity between Sri Sita and Sri Rama and between Sri Radha and Sri Krishna, there must be a unity between the Holy Mother and the Master. But when he saw Mother as an ordinary woman, he became confused and enquired: "Why do I see you as though making *chapati* like any ordinary woman? What are all these? Are these *maya*?" The Mother replied, "What else but *maya*? Why should I be in such a state if not because of *maya*? I should have been sitting by Narayana as His Lakshmi in Vaikuntha" (465).

There are hundreds of such instances through which one obtains a glimpse of Sri Sarada Devi's real nature.

The Divine Sri Radha

Sri Ramakrishna sent the young Saradaprasanna, Swami Trigunatitananda, to seek initiation from the Holy Mother and quoted a couplet: 'Infinite is the maya of Radha which defies definition. A million Krishnas and a million Ramas have birth, and live, and die' (121).

Sri Ramakrishna once asked Gauri-Ma in fun, who was a regular visitor to Dakshineswar, whom she loved most. Gauri-Ma, avoiding a direct reply, sang a song: "You

aren't greater than Radha (your sweetheart), O Fluteplayer (Krishna), / People in danger call on You as Madhusudana; / But when it's Your turn to cry, You make Your flute call, / 'O thou, Radha, thou young maid.'" The meaning of the song was very clear. The Mother pressed Gauri-Ma's hand in sheer shame, and the Master left smiling in utter discomfiture' (123).

Asked by a disciple as to how she should do japa of the Master's and Mother's name, the Holy Mother instructed her thus: 'You may do so (thinking of me) as Radha or any other (goddess)' (434). The word *radha* means prosperity, success, and *siddhi*, perfection. So thinking of the Holy Mother as Sri Radha gives one these spiritual qualities, which lead to moksha, liberation. In *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* we find

Sri Radha



Sri Ramakrishna saying: ‘When Krishna went to Mathura, Yashoda came to Radha, who was absorbed in meditation. Afterwards Radha said to Yashoda: “I am the Primordial Energy. Ask a boon of Me.” “What other boon shall I ask of You?” said Yashoda. “Only bless me that I may serve God with my body, mind, and tongue; that I may behold His devotees with these eyes, that I may meditate on Him with this mind, and that I may chant His name and glories with this tongue.”’⁸

Sri Radha is portrayed by the Vaishnavas as being imbued with dignity, poise, ladylike demeanour, great patience, and self-effacement. The Holy Mother too was all this and much more. While at Kamarpukur the shy Holy Mother hesitated to go to bathe in the Haldarpukur. She found, to her surprise, that eight girls approached her, four of whom walked in front of her and four behind. They all went to the pond, had a dip, and returned in the same manner. Only she could see them and this happened the whole time the Holy Mother stayed in Kamarpukur.⁹ These were the *ashtha sakhis*, eight companions, of the Divine Mother. Significantly, Sri Radha’s close confidantes were also eight in number; they were Lalita, Vishakha, Chitra, Champakalata, Tungavidya, Indulekha, Bangadevi, and Sudevi.

Pramada Datta, a lady doctor and member of the Brahmo Samaj, on seeing the Holy Mother’s photograph at Udbodhan for the first time, gushed: ‘Well, she is Radha herself.’¹⁰ Having then met the Holy Mother in person and touching her feet, Pramada’s conviction was confirmed, that the Holy Mother was none other than Sri Radha. When a priest who worshipped Sitala wished to set out for Vrindavan to have the darshan of Sri Radha, Gauri-Ma brought him along to the Holy Mother. She said to the priest: ‘Look at her, and know

that she is the one you are longing to see.’¹¹ The brahmana Vaishnava priest made pranams to the Holy Mother, looked up at her and became spellbound. Bowing again to her the priest chanted hymns to Sri Radha with folded hands and said: ‘I pray to Radha, who is the embodiment of ecstasy’ (ibid.).

A boy had lost his mother when he was a child. He learnt about the Holy Mother after reading the *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Punthi*. When he came and met her, he fell into a trance and felt that the Holy Mother was none but his chosen deity. He came round only when the Holy Mother reached out and touched him. The boy then saw Radha-Krishna conjoined in the Mother, with Sri Radha reclining a bit. Mother said: ‘You are of a Vaishnava family that is why you had such a vision. If this dual image of Radha-Krishna appears to you again, you aren’t to call Her Mother.’¹²

In the Mood of Sri Radha

Sri Sarada Devi once told a devotee: ‘I, indeed, am Radha.’¹³ One day, while at Vrindavan, the Holy Mother lost all outer consciousness in deep samadhi. Even Yogin-Ma’s repeating one of God’s names in her ears for a long time did not bring her back to consciousness. Swami Yogananda also tried and failed. When they noticed signs of her coming down to normal consciousness, the Holy Mother said: “I shall eat,” just as the Master used to say after deep *samadhi*’ (142). In the ‘Gopigita’ of the Bhagavata it is narrated that Sri Krishna suddenly disappeared from the field of his sport, while the gopis, overcome with grief and forgetful of everything, looked for him. While intensely searching for him they began to identify so closely with the object of their love that they started impersonating Sri Krishna and regarded themselves as him. In the Holy Mother’s life

we find this incident being repeated. She was then in such a blissful state that her yearning for Sri Krishna's presence and her utterance of Sri Krishna's name was so intense that those present felt her to be Sri Radha.

The Holy Mother used to walk alone to the shores of the Yamuna in Vrindavan. 'One does not know, she might have then thought of herself as Radha, the sweetheart of Krishna, and of Sri Ramakrishna as Krishna, and was thus lost in the bliss of union in the Vrindavan of her heart!' (141).

She used to feel that she was back in a by-gone yuga. But she could not see Sri Radha anywhere, for she herself had been transformed into Sri Radha. So intense was her feeling of not finding Sri Krishna around that she once wept bitterly and fainted. Kalidasi, a widow, becoming alarmed at Mother's state sprinkled water on her face, all the while saying 'Radheyshyam' in an undertone. The Holy Mother was eventually carried back carefully to Kalababu's Kunja, and it took quite a while to bring her round.¹⁴ One day, as she was sailing on the Yamuna, her companions found her intently scanning the river, as if she was looking for someone or something. Soon she was leaning over dangerously and reaching out, as if grabbing at someone. Seeing her quite close to falling into the water Yogen Maharaj shouted in alarm and Gauri-Ma and Golap-Ma held her back. It was quite some time before the Holy Mother regained her bearings. Did the river evoke in her mind Sri Radha's overpowering urge for uniting with Sri Krishna? (Ibid.).

Once when the Holy Mother was in Calcutta, Jatindranath Mitra was mellifluously singing a song on how Sri Radha had pined for Sri Krishna. While listening to the song with rapt attention the Holy Mother fell into a trance. She sent a request through Golap-Ma

for the singer to finish with an evocation of the eventual union of Sri Radha and Sri Krishna. It demonstrates that Sri Radha personified herself in the Holy Mother and Sri Ramakrishna. Interestingly, in that particular case, the Holy Mother regained her consciousness only after the word 'Mother' was softly repeated and not that of 'Radha'.¹⁵

Forms of Love

In *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* Radha is qualified with three distinct attributes: 'The Vaishnava scriptures speak of "Kam-Radha", "Prem-Radha", and "Nitya-Radha". Chandravali is Kam-Radha, and Srimati is Prem-Radha; Nanda saw Nitya-Radha holding Gopala in Her arms.'¹⁶ Speaking of different forms of love Sri Ramakrishna said: 'In the first, which is ordinary love, the lover seeks his own happiness; he doesn't care whether the other person is happy or not. That was Chandravali's attitude toward Krishna. In the second, which is a compromise, both seek each other's happiness. This is a noble kind of love. But the third is the highest of all. Such a lover says to his beloved, "Be happy yourself, whatever may happen to me." Radha had this highest love. She was happy in Krishna's happiness' (766).

Though Sri Radha's love for Sri Krishna was unmatched and sublime, Chandravali vied with Sri Radha for Sri Krishna's love. Both fearlessly discarded social strictures, honour, and neighbours' scorn. But Chandravali's love was self-centred, meant for the satisfaction of her own desire, happiness, and pleasure.

Once the sky turned threateningly dark with thunderclouds while the cattle of Nanda, Krishna's foster-father, strayed far out in the pasture. In response to Nanda's fervent prayers Srimati, another of Sri Radha's names, appeared there and took charge of the baby Krishna by placing him on her lap.



Radha Worships Krishna's Feet

Lack of modesty coupled with wiles is a characteristic of some women in varying degrees. However, Sri Radha's love for Sri Krishna amounted to her surrendering herself to him completely and selflessly. Untainted by profanity or earthly longing Sri Radha's love for Sri Krishna is beyond the grasp of ordinary human beings. It is *madhura bhava*, sweet spiritual mood, which is the sum total of all other *bhavas* such as *shanta*, peaceful; *dasya*, servitor; *sakhya*, friendship; and *vatsalya*, maternal love. 'Once Radha, to prove her chastity, carried on her head a pitcher filled with water. The pitcher had a thousand holes, but not a drop of water spilled. People began to praise her, saying, "Such a chaste woman the world will never see again!" Then Radha said

to them: "Why do you praise me?" Say: "Glory unto Krishna! Hail Krishna!" I am only His handmaid' (891). This is indicative of the *dasya bhava*; she used to be in the *shanta bhava* when her thoughts centred round Sri Krishna; the *sakhya bhava* came over her while playing with Sri Krishna when she would be quite frolicsome; the *vatsalya bhava*, as we have seen, came when she put Sri Krishna on her lap.

The Holy Mother agreed to live in the cramped *nahabat* at Dakshineswar, with all its inconveniences, in order to be at hand for the service of Sri Ramakrishna. Her *dasya bhava* was all too manifest by acts like these. Just as a mother cajoles her child to eat a little more, so did the Holy Mother feed Sri Ramakrishna. She used to sit beside him while he ate, lovingly persuading him to eat more. When Sri Ramakrishna was not well she also used to condense the milk by boiling it down so that he could drink a little more than his usual quantity—this was

vatsalya bhava. There was also a deep sense of friendship between them, which was *sakhya bhava*. Besides, the mood of universal motherhood that reigned in her heart made her feel at times that even Sri Ramakrishna was a child. As her love was pure, chaste, and intense it formed the basis of her *madhura bhava*.

Swamiji says: 'Ay, forget first the love for gold, and name and fame, and for this little trump-ery world of ours. Then, only then, you will understand the love of the Gopis, too holy to be attempted without giving up everything, too sacred to be understood until the soul has become perfectly pure.'¹⁷

The Holy Mother had declared: 'I, indeed, am Radha.' Sri Ramakrishna explained the

metaphysical significance of Sri Radha and Sri Krishna to Swamiji and a friend he brought to him. The friend, an author, said 'that Radha and Krishna were the Supreme Brahman. Vishnu, Siva, Durga, and the other deities had sprung from them.'¹⁸ Sri Ramakrishna was delighted and further explained: 'There are different aspects of Radha. ... First is the seductive Radha, then the Radha of love. If you go farther, you will see the Eternal Radha. It is like taking off the layers of an onion one by one. First the red layers, then the pink, then the white. Afterwards you don't find any more layers. Such is the nature of the Eternal Radha, Radha the Absolute. There the discrimination following the process of "Not this, not this" comes to an end' (ibid.). Sri Ramakrishna said that there were two aspects of Radha-Krishna: absolute and relative. The absolute can be likened to the sun, while the relative to the rays. In reality the sun and its rays are one.

In Vrindavan Gangamayi, a saintly old woman, seeing Sri Ramakrishna's ecstasy said: 'He is the very embodiment of Radha' (129). She addressed him as 'Dulali' and did not want him to leave Vrindavan. At one time Swamiji dreamt that Sri Ramakrishna came to him and transformed into Sri Radha:

'Come! I will show you Gopi Radha!' Naren followed him. After going some distance the Master turned to him and said, 'Where else will you go?' Saying this, Shri Ramakrishna transformed himself into the beautiful personality and exquisite form of Radha herself. This so affected the conscious mind of Naren that whereas formerly he had only sung the songs of the Brahmo Samaj relating to the Formless Brahman, he now sang songs on the intense spiritual love of Radha, the individual soul for Shri Krishna, the indwelling Beloved One. When he narrated this dream to his brother-disciples, they were amazed. One asked him,

'Do you believe in the significance of this?' Naren answered, 'Surely I do.'¹⁹

From the absolute point of view Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi are one, and from the relative they are the male and female aspects of God. Thus as a single entity they can say: 'I am Radha.'



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Indian Secularism and Swami Vivekananda

Dr Aditya Kumar Gupta



THIS ARTICLE SEEKS to explore the nature of Indian secularism and indicate certain conceptual errors behind its weak application in Indian society. It is based only on philosophy and its social correlations.

Different from the Western sense of neutrality and indifference, Indian secularism has been defined in the sense of 'equal respect for all religions'. But the respect for 'others' can be generated also by recognizing positive values in each religion, a practical approach that is found in the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda.

The word 'secular' is defined in the *New Oxford Illustrated Dictionary* (1978) as that which is 'concerned with the affairs of this world; worldly; not sacred, not monastic or ecclesiastical, temporal, profane, lay; sceptic to religious truth or opposed to religious education'. Secularism in the West arose in the context of the conflict between the church and the state, as a sort of separation of jurisdiction and power between the two. This secularism was the need of the time in the Western world, in view of unnecessary and frequent interference by the church in public affairs.

George Jacob Holyoake (1817–1906) was the first to coin the word 'secularism' and to conceptualize it. Charles Bradlaugh (1833–91) agreed with Holyoake and further elaborated the concept's basic tenets. Both of them gave a wholly materialistic and atheistic connotation to secularism, thereby rejecting the existence of all supernatural entities, including God and soul. 'They regarded morality as completely independent of religion and attached the highest importance to the worldly duties of man. They held that science alone (rather than prayer) could save man from disease, poverty, illiteracy and terrible natural calamities.'¹

At the political level, the Western model of secularism means that religion and politics are separate from each other. In other words, polity does not enter into religious affairs, nor religion

into political affairs. This also means that the political mechanism cannot correct problems inside a religious group.

Indian Version of Secularism

When India got independence, it adopted this Western concept as a 'basic feature' of Indian polity and society. But unlike in the West, there had not been serious conflicts between religion and the state in India. On the contrary, there had generally been a happy symbiosis of the two in this country. Moreover, the Indian mindset is basically religious. Indians are largely ruled by rituals and religious beliefs in day-to-day life. Religion is deeply rooted in the Indian psyche. According to Swami Vivekananda, every nation has its particular bent, and the dominant note of Indian civilization has always been religion. Religion is an intrinsic value around which the whole culture or nation has been built. All the other values of life become instrumental in perfecting that central value.

Therefore, in a country where every act of life is governed by religious rituals, mythologies, and customs it was impossible to apply 'secularism' in the Western sense. India has developed a distinctively Indian and different variant of secularism. It was modified according to India's age-old philosophy as expounded in the scriptures called Upanishads. Down the ages India has developed a rich tradition of secularism based on '*sarva dharma samabhava*; equal respect for all belief systems'. Indian secularism is conceptually similar to religious pluralism. Dr S Radhakrishnan, considered to be the main advocate of this Indian spiritual interpretation of secularism, explains: 'Secularism as here defined is in accordance with the ancient religious tradition of India. It tries to build up a fellowship of believers, not by subordinating individual qualities to the group mind but by

bringing them into harmony with each other.'² Elsewhere he states: 'Secularism here does not mean irreligion or atheism or even stress on material comforts. It proclaims that it lays stress on spiritual values [that] may be attained by a variety of ways.'³

Indian secularism is based on the belief that all religions are equally good. It is a bridge to cross the barriers in a multi-religious society. It is, as Radhakrishnan put it, an extension of the principle of democracy to religion. Religious toleration is an essential part of Indian secularism. Being a multi-religious country and also the home of many religions, religious tolerance became its bedrock.

The Indian Constitution too includes many provisions that directly or indirectly are secular in nature. Though the word 'secular' was introduced by the 42nd Amendment Act, 1976, the spirit of secularism already existed in many provisions of the Constitution. The Fundamental Rights, especially Art. 14–16 and Art. 25–30, are categorical examples of it.

Secular India Revised

Now, let us analyse the practice of secularism in India, especially its social aspect. How do people follow secularism in daily life? To what extent is it working here? Has it really been successful in removing inter-religious hatred from society? Do Indians really have the same respect for other religions as they have for their own?

If we reflect, even a little, upon these questions, perhaps the answers would be largely negative. The Hindu-Muslim animosities, which had eased in the years following independence, have surfaced again, now in a more organized way. Various communal riots, demolition of places of worship, support of terrorism in the name of religion, certain cases of appeasement, vote bank politics, and similar

cases are examples that we Indians are not practising true secularism. 'While the aggressive elements among the leaders of the so-called minorities raise cries of alarm that India is fast degenerating into a Hindu country, their counterparts among the Hindus cry foul and accuse the Government of minorityism.'⁴ In the words of Swami Vivekananda: 'The tiger in us is only asleep; it is not dead. When opportunities come, it jumps up and, as of old, uses its claws and fangs. Apart from the swords, apart from material weapons, there are weapons still more terrible—contempt, social hatred, and social ostracism.'⁵

Therefore, we can say that secularism in India has failed to a great extent. Of course, there are some bright examples of communal harmony, but largely the Indian mindset is susceptible to communalism. Many Hindus do not see truth in Islam or Christianity. Muslims, in general, do not want to be flexible at any cost. And for the majority of Christians, only Christ can be the saviour of humankind. What a blind love we have for our own religion that does not allow us to see the truth in others! In this situation no secularism, neither Indian nor Western, can work.

Conceptual Aberrations

There are certain conceptual errors behind the breakdown of secularism in Indian society. But the real problem lies in ignorance at two levels: incomplete knowledge of one's own religion, and lack of understanding of good elements in other religions.

According to Vivekananda, every great and recognized religion has three aspects. First, there is the philosophical aspect, which presents the whole scope of that religion and sets forth its basic principles, the goal, and the means of reaching that goal. The second aspect is the

mythological, which is philosophy made concrete. It consists of legends relating to the lives of men, women, or supernatural beings. It is abstract philosophy made concrete in the more or less imaginary lives of humans and supernatural beings. The third aspect is the ritualistic, which is still more concrete and made up of forms and ceremonies, various physical attitudes, and many other things that appeal to the senses so that they can be directed to the higher goal. Almost every religion has these three aspects, in one or other forms; some lay more stress on one, some on another.

As far as knowledge of one's own religion is concerned, Indians are mostly aware of basic rituals, beliefs, and certain mythologies. A farmer in India, for example, might not have a college degree or even any schooling, but he would be well aware of basic rituals, myths, and beliefs of his religion. He would be prepared to argue in defence of his religious beliefs. Every house in India is a training school for religious rituals and prayers, though many may not know the reasons behind them. Society unites different groups in the name of these beliefs, rituals, and so forth.

However, if we look a bit more closely, it becomes clear that we Indians have only a surface knowledge of our respective religions: 'If you asked people what they had learned or expressed through participation in such rituals, they would find the question rather strange. In most human groups people have all sorts of rituals but no good explanation of why they should be performed.'⁶ In India religion works only at an emotional level; rational satisfaction is not sought, as we are driven by our emotions, a crowd psychology, and a sheep-like mentality.

The result of such a mindset in Indian society is two-fold: communalism and wrong application of religious principles. Emotional people are always prone to exploitation by the clever

ones. And whenever there is a call from fanatical leaders, those who follow religion by emotions are the first to attack the so-called 'others' in society. How is it that instead of hearing the sweet music of harmony we hear only strains of discord? Through the ages evils have been perpetrated in the name of religion. True, religion has been a source of light, strength, hope, and peace to humankind, but it is also an undeniable fact that, because of religion millions of men and women have had to pass through unspeakable horrors, humiliation, and suffering. And behind these suffering were those who had not reached even the basic philosophy of their own religions. As Swamiji said:

We find that though there is nothing that has brought to man more blessings than religion, yet at the same time, there is nothing that has brought more horror than religion. Nothing has made more for peace and love than religion; nothing has engendered fiercer hatred than religion. Nothing has made the brotherhood of man more tangible than religion; nothing has bred more bitter enmity between man and man than religion. Nothing has built more charitable institutions, more hospitals for men, and

even for animals, than religion; nothing has deluged the world with more blood than religion.⁷

There has been more bloodshed in the name of God than for any other cause, because people never went to the fountain-head (1.127).

The other tragedy, attached with this 'surface-epistemology' of religion, is that it prevents its followers from learning real religion. The aim of any religion is to keep its followers united in the name of certain moral prescriptions. Rituals and mythologies transmit the essence of a religion from one generation to another. If we study the great religions of the world, we find that these external, concrete symbols have played a very important role in spreading religion from one part of the world to another: 'Through rituals, people perhaps grasp or express important messages about themselves, their relationship to each other and their connection with gods and spirits.'⁸ But religion is not all rituals or mythologies. When we emphasize these external symbols of religion, we forget to pursue the real essence of it. Real religion dawns in one's life only when a person touches the core of it.

The other reason that Indian secularism has failed is due to its negative or neutral attitude

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of one religion towards 'other' religions. This problem is related to 'religious pluralism' as well. Like religious pluralism, Indian secularism requires a positive mindset towards other religions. But how can this attitude be inculcated in people's minds? Present-day Indian secularism does not prescribe any practical path. Preaching alone will not make anyone liberal from a religious point of view. In our daily life we develop respect for those with whom we feel some positive connection. Without knowing someone's good values, how can we have respect for that person? And if respect for someone or something is imposed from outside, at the most it can create religious toleration in society. But according to Swamiji, 'toleration' is a negative term. Toleration means that I think that you are wrong and I am just allowing you to coexist. This 'forced love' is inevitable in any society where people are not aware of the good aspects of each other. And in the absence of knowledge of other religions, religious leaders tend to make absolute claims.

'We have been like a company of people marching down a long valley, singing our own songs, developing over the centuries our own stories and slogans, unaware that over the hills there is another valley, with another great company of people marching in the same direction, but with their own language and songs and stories and ideas; and over another hill yet another marching group—each ignorant of the existence of the others.'⁹ Singing the glories of one's own religion and seeing truth only in it is the basis of religious fanaticism; and fanatics commit all types of atrocities in the name of religion. True Indian secularism requires a society where people have a positive attitude towards other religions, and this is possible only when people learn the good aspects of other religions. Knowledge of the universal aspects in

other religions is a prerequisite for generating deep respect towards them.

Vivekananda's Philosophy: A Perfect Approach

Now, the question is: are there good elements in all religions? In an answer to the question 'what is good in Islam?' Vivekananda replied: 'If there were no good how could it live? The good alone lives, that alone survives. ... How could Mohammedanism have lived, had there been nothing good in its teaching? There is much good. Mohammed was the Prophet of equality, of the brotherhood of man, the brotherhood of all Mussalmans.'¹⁰ The same answer can be given about all other religions. And according to Swamiji, each of these different religions has excelled in one or other aspect of spirituality. Each of them has its own soul on which it has given more emphasis: 'Each religion, as it were, takes up one part of the great universal truth, and spends its whole force in embodying and typifying that part of the great truth. It is, therefore, addition, not exclusion. That is the idea' (2.365). There may be ups and downs in every great religion, but the soul of a religion is never lost. As far as that mission is intact, no religion can be lost. We all should know about that ideal, the mission of other religions as well.


As hinted above, in Islam that ideal for which almost all energy has been spent is brotherhood. Islam treats all its followers as equal, and this is the particular excellence of this religion. There is no feeling of higher or lower, no feeling of black and white. Once you accept Islam, every Muslim receives you as his own brother. And what Islam comes to preach to the world is this practical brotherhood of all belonging to their faith. There is no empty talk here; Muslims make this possible by their behaviour. Islam is the champion of equality; everybody is equal for

a Muslim, irrespective of his or her status, caste, or place of birth. The only condition is being a Muslim. In a lecture delivered at a church in California Vivekananda said: 'As soon as a man becomes a Mohammedan, the whole of Islam receives him as a brother with open arms, without making any distinction, which no other religion does. If one of your American Indians becomes a Mohammedan, the Sultan of Turkey would have no objection to dine with him' (2.371).

The central idea in Christianity is 'purity of heart and mind' by means of service to humankind. Christ taught: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'¹¹ Holiness or purity is that attitude in our spirit that manifests through our thoughts, desires, and actions, which make us do only what we know and believe to be God's will. To keep this spirit alive Christians all over the world try to come nearer to God by helping others. They open charity hospitals and schools for the welfare of humanity. In India, can we forget the contribution of Mother Teresa? She became the mother of thousands of poor children and she took care of them with a true spirit of service. She did not even hesitate to serve leprosy patients.

In the same way, the central idea of Hinduism lies in spirituality. According to Swami Vivekananda: 'They [the Hindus] tried to define the ideal of soul so that no earthly touch might mar it. The spirit must be divine; and spirit understood as spirit must not be made into man. ... Renunciation and spirituality are the two great ideas of India, and it is because India clings to these ideas that all her mistakes count for so little.'¹² It is true that in the name of religion thousands of people are being exploited by high-profile religious leaders, but all this happens because the Hindu mind is religious by nature and therefore it is easier to fool Hindus in the name of religion. However, this

is the religion that has given one of the highest spiritual philosophies to the world through the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita. The practice of yoga is still one of the propagators of Hindu spirituality to the world.

Like these great religions, we can extend our search to the soul of every other religion. We can say that ahimsa, non-violence, is the essence of Jainism; dhyana, meditation, of Buddhism; regard for the guru, of Sikhism. Therefore, we can conclude with Swamiji's words, that every religion 'represents a great truth; each religion represents a particular excellence—something which is its soul' (2.370). Everybody can be benefited by the excellences of other religions. It is the beauty of the world that we have so many paths of spirituality and religion. Only by recognizing and respecting in practice, in the heart, this diversity will India achieve true Indian secularism. 

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An Imaginary Interview with Sri Ramakrishna

Swami Chetanananda

REPORTER: Sir, we would like to interview you for our magazine. I shall ask you a few questions and our readers will be delighted to hear direct from you. Please introduce yourself.

Ramakrishna: My name is Gadadhar Chattopadhyay; my village friends would call me Gadai, but people know me as Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. My father's name was Kshudiram Chattopadhyay and my mother's, Chandramani Devi. I was born in 1836 at Kamarpukur village and lived there for sixteen years. In 1852 my elder brother Ramkumar took me to Calcutta for further education and also to help him perform priestly rituals in some people's homes. We used to live in a small room on Bechu Chatterjee Street. From 1855 to 1885 I lived at Dakshineswar as a priest of Rani Rasmani's Kali temple, but I performed the rituals for only a few years. The last year of my life I lived in Shyampukur and Kashipur.

Reporter: We know that you were a great sadhaka and you had the vision of Kali and of many gods and goddesses. We will be very happy if you can tell us the story of your sadhana and what kind of obstacles you faced.

Ramakrishna: Look, Sharat (Swami Saradananda) wrote about my sadhana in detail in the second part of the *Lilaprasanga* (*Sri Ramakrishna and His Divine Play*), and also I spoke about spiritual disciplines at different times to the devotees, and this was all recorded by Mahendranath Gupta (M) in the *Kathamrita* (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*). Ask your

readers to read those books. However, I will narrate briefly the kind of obstacles I had to face.

After my vision of the Divine Mother people at the Kali temple thought that I had gone mad. Mathur engaged a few Ayurvedic doctors who prescribed 'Madhyam Narayan oil' and 'Vishnu oil' (these are different kinds of medicinal oils that have a cooling effect on the body). These oils are used by mad people. I put gallons of those oils on my head and my navel.

I slapped Rani Rasmani (Mathur's mother-in-law) in the Kali temple because she was thinking of a lawsuit there. On that very day Mathur thought that I was really crazy, and the cause of my craziness was my unbroken chastity. To break my chastity Mathur hired a prostitute. When I was performing the arati in the Kali temple, that prostitute entered my room and sat on my bed waiting for me. There was an oil-lamp flickering in the corner of my room. When I came to my room, I saw a beautiful girl with *dagar-dagar chokh* (large fascinating eyes). Seeing that beautiful girl I ran out and called Haladhari and Hriday. They and some temple workers rushed to my room. Seeing a big crowd that young girl hung her head in shame and left the room.

To tell you the truth, I passed through various ordeals during the time of my sadhana. I suffered from burning sensations in my body and also from blood dysentery. I was completely oblivious to food and sleep. Being totally unconscious of the external world, snakes would crawl across my knees and birds would sit on my

head. Moreover, the temple officials ill-treated me. During that time only one person stood by me and saved the situation. That was a woman, Bhairavi Brahmani. She was a great yogini and was expert in tantric scriptures. She saw all the signs of an avatara in me. She challenged Mathur and asked him to bring several scholars to the temple, and she would prove to them that these signs in me were the signs of *maha-bhava*. Chaitanya had those signs.

Mathur was tired of spending money for my treatment. Anyhow, he invited Vaishnavacharan and Gauri Pandit and other scholars to Dakshineswar, and in that gathering Bhairavi proved, by quoting the scriptures, that my divine ecstasy was not madness. The scholars also finally agreed, and that convinced Mathur. This was a great relief for me. Afterwards the Divine Mother showed to Mathur the forms of Kali and Shiva in my body, and from that time on Mathur served me with great devotion for fourteen years.

Reporter: Your father died when you were young. Did your mother and brothers help you in your spiritual life?

Ramakrishna: No, they did not help me much in spiritual life. Ramkumar, my eldest brother, was thirty-one years older than me, and the second brother Rameshwar was ten years older. They loved me and tried to educate me, but I was not interested in a bread-earning education. Then, when I came back for a visit to Kamarpukur, my mother thought that I was possessed by a spirit, so she engaged an exorcist to rid me of the spirit. They could not understand my divine madness. When nothing worked, my mother and second brother thought that if they put the responsibility for a girl on my shoulders, then that girl would straighten me out. They began to search for a bride. Finally, I told them to go to the house of Ram Mukhopadhyay in Jayrambati, as his daughter was earmarked for me. There they located

Sarada, a five-year old girl. The marriage was arranged; my brother took a loan of three hundred rupees to pay the bride price and I got married.

Reporter: You are a Paramahansa sannyasin and you have given up 'woman and gold'. Still we are eager to know a little more about your married life.

Ramakrishna: Sharat has written elaborately about why I married in the third and fourth parts of the *Lilaprasanga*. Ask your readers to read it. Listen, Rama, Krishna, Buddha, and Chaitanya were avatars and they were all married. The first three of them had children and the last two left their wives. I married to demonstrate how one can transcend the physical relationship while being a married man. Without marrying, if I had given advice about renunciation, people would comment: 'Well, he is a monk, so he is talking about renunciation. He has no knowledge of family life.' Five years after my marriage I took monastic vows from Totapuri. Then I attained *nirvikalpa* samadhi and became absorbed in Brahman.

I was very fortunate for having a wonderful wife. Have you noticed that some enamoured men praise their wives? You see, I don't belong to that group. Sarada was a village girl, very straightforward, very simple, shy, hardworking, gentle, and extremely intelligent. She never demanded anything from me.

Observing that I had become a sannyasin, my mother-in-law used to lament that later her daughter would not have any children. You see, the nature of old ladies all over the world is the same. They hanker for grandchildren. One day I told my mother-in-law: 'Listen, mother, please do not worry. Your daughter will have so many children that her ears will burn from constantly being called 'Ma, Ma, Ma.'

Reporter: The Brahmos said that you ill-treated your wife because you did not have the usual marital relationship with her.

Ramakrishna: It is not true. I never ill-treated my wife. I loved my wife very dearly. I never quarrelled and never hurt her, not even as much as by throwing a flower at her. I always addressed her with respect saying *tumi* and not *tui*.¹ One evening at Dakshineswar I was in an ecstatic mood and hearing a sound I thought it was my niece Lakshmi, so I said: 'Shut the door as you go out,' addressing her familiarly as *tui*. When I heard 'all right,' I realized it was Sarada. I was startled and said: 'Oh, it is you! I thought it was Lakshmi. Please forgive me for addressing you as *tui*.' Look, we were married for twenty-seven years and not a single day did we have any misunderstanding or fight. Could you show me another example like that of a married couple nowadays? I trained my wife in various ways and gave her so many spiritual instructions. I even arranged a teacher who taught her how to read primary books in Bengali. She could write and read the Ramayana and the Mahabharata in Bengali. In the beginning she did not know how to cook properly, and then my sister-in-law Shakambhari taught her. She never met my eldest sister-in-law Sarvajaya, who died in 1849 while giving birth to Akshay. Sarada served me and my old mother with love and great care. I installed a pitcher of bliss in her heart.

Reporter: According to the Hindu tradition, a wife considers her husband to be a god and worships his feet. In your case, you did the reverse. You put vermillion on your wife's forehead, applied *alta* (red paint) around her feet, worshipped her with flowers and sandal paste, and bowed down to her, touching her feet. Is this right?

Ramakrishna: You modern people won't understand the mystery of my worshipping her as the goddess Shodashi. Let me tell you frankly, you people consider women as 'second class' citizens. How much they are humiliated, persecuted, and abused! By worshipping Sarada as the goddess Shodashi I gave the supreme honour and dignity to womankind. I awakened the Motherhood of God in her and offered the results of all my sadhanas so that she could carry my message and demonstrate the motherhood of God to the world.

Reporter: One hundred and seventy-seven years have passed since your birth. Do you see any change around you?

Ramakrishna: This world of maya is ever changing. Only God never changes. Look at Kamarpukur, my birth place, which used to be called the 'queen of villages'. Now it has electric light, a cinema house, TV in most houses,

Sri Ramakrishna temple at Kamarpukur



restaurants, hotels, studios, shops, a school and college, paved roads, cars, buses, and so on. The mango tree that I planted has grown so big. The Ramakrishna Mission has established a stone temple on my birthplace, and Raghuvir's thatched hut has been replaced by a brick structure. The Shiva temple of the Pyne family is gone, but the tin roof of the Laha's school is still standing on some posts. A couple of *jilipi* (an Indian sweet) shops are still there.

I remember when I first went to Calcutta with my brother via the Telo-Bhelo meadow. We had to cross four big rivers—Dwarakeshwar, Mundeshwari, Damodar, and Ganga. But now bridges have been constructed across all those rivers. Previously it would take three days to reach Calcutta from Kamarpukur, and now you can reach there in about three hours.

Look at the irony of nature! The landlord of Dere village evicted my honest father from our parental home because he had refused to give false witness in favour of the landlord. That palatial building of the landlord has been reduced to rubble, and the villagers of Dere have built a temple with a marble statue of me on our old family property. Just see, truth always triumphs.

Reporter: You were present during the dedication ceremony of Dakshineswar temple in 1855. What changes do you see there?

Ramakrishna: Mother Kali's image in the temple is unchanged, and so is the temple complex. You will have to understand that those buildings are a hundred and fifty-eight years old and so they have deteriorated to a great extent. But somehow the descendants of Rani Rasmani continue to repair and repaint those buildings. The floor of my room was of red cement; now it has been changed to mosaic. They have kept my two cots as they were but put lots of pictures in my room. You see, I collected some pictures and images—Kali, Krishna, Rama, Chaitanya and

his kirtan party, Dhruva, Prahlada, Christ extending his hand to Peter, plus a marble image of Buddha, and also an image of Ramlala. It created a spiritual atmosphere in my room. But I am sorry to tell you that some have been stolen, specially my beloved Ramlala.

During Rasmani's time I repaired the foot of the broken image of Krishna and installed it on the altar. In 1930 her descendants replaced the old Krishna image with a new one. And the image of Krishna that I repaired has been on an altar in the north room of the Krishna temple. Music is no longer played from the *nahabat* (music tower). I saw that Sarada's marble statue has been installed in the northern *nahabat*. During the centenary of the Dakshineswar temple in 1955 Rani Rasmani's temple was dedicated between my room and the *nahabat*. My beloved banyan tree in the Panchavati and also the bel tree are dead. They were witnesses of my sadhana. My *sadhan kutir*, where I practised Advaita sadhana, was a thatched hut and now it is a brick building. No one can stop the flow of time. The village of Dakshineswar is now part of the city of Kolkata. Two bridges have been constructed over the Ganga near the southern side of Dakshineswar temple. A meditation cottage has been built near the pine grove in the north. If you really want to know more about Dakshineswar during my time, then read Mahendranath Gupta's description of the temple garden of Dakshineswar in the *Kathamrita*.

Reporter: Sir, Dakshineswar is a marvellous place and you lived there for thirty years. Now it is a historical as well as a holy place, and every day many people visit it.

Ramakrishna: I really loved Dakshineswar; it was the place of my sadhana and my divine play. Once I wanted to leave Dakshineswar, but Mathur did not let me. I told him that I would stay as long as he was alive. But he said to me:

‘Father, my wife Jagadamba loves you, so please stay.’ I said: ‘All right, as long as she lives, I will stay.’ Again he said: ‘Father, my son Dwaraka is very fond of you.’ ‘All right, as long he lives, I will stay,’ I said. Mathur knew who I was, so he did not want me to leave Dakshineswar. However, Dwaraka died in 1878 and Jagadamba in 1880. I left Dakshineswar in 1885 and went to Calcutta for my cancer treatment. I lived in Shyampukur for seventy days. I could not stay there longer because I could not bear the pollution from the coal smoke from the kitchens of the neighbourhood. I wanted to return to Dakshineswar, but Mathur’s son Trailokya did not allow me to come back. As it was hard for me to breathe in Calcutta, the devotees rented a nice garden house in Kashipur, where I stayed till the end of my life.

Reporter: Sir, please tell us about your great disciples.

Ramakrishna: Those stories are all published in many books. However, I will tell you a few things. My main disciple, Narendra (Swami Vivekananda), used to think that I was an unlettered person. I told him categorically that I knew the alphabet. Perhaps you have seen my signature ‘Sri Gadadhar Chattopadhyay’ in some printed books. Moreover, I copied some books such as the story of Harishchandra, the story of Mahiravan, the story of Subahu, and the story of Yogodya, which you may find now in the Belur Math museum. The Divine Mother taught me the essence of all the scriptures.

Narendra was proud of his learning and intellect. He used to tell me: ‘Sir, you are illiterate. What can you teach me?’ I told him: ‘Very good, I will not have to talk then. You just come here and enjoy this beautiful temple garden.’ Afterwards, observing my samadhi and the depth of my spiritual experiences he was puzzled. And finally, one day he said to me: ‘Sir,

could you give me some medicine so that I can forget what I have learned?’

Really, I had some wonderful disciples. I trained them and transmitted my spirituality to them so that they could carry my message. Now people are dumbfounded observing their divine lives. They are now in the pages of history along with me.

Reporter: You are talking about your monastic disciples, but your householder disciples such as Mahendranath Gupta, Girishchandra Ghosh, Ramchandra Datta, and others also preached your message.

Ramakrishna: Of course they did. Their contributions are not insignificant. You see, Mahendranath Gupta was a wonderful devotee, but a shy and tongue-tied person. He was a school teacher and used to record my conversations in his diary secretly. Later he developed those records and published the *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*, and thus my message spread all over the world. Now you can even find it as an e-book. Girish was a drunkard and debauchee, but his life was totally changed when he gave me the power of attorney. He incorporated my teachings in his dramas and spread my message in the districts of Calcutta. Ram gave lectures on me in the Star and Minerva theatres in Calcutta and spread my message. Surendra, Balaram, Durgacharan, Kalipada, and others were also wonderful devotees. My women devotees—Yogin, Gauri, Golap, Aghoremani, and Nistarini—were also outstanding.

(To be concluded)

Note

1. In the Bengali language there are three forms of the second person pronoun. When addressing a revered elder, *apni* is used. To a person of equal rank and age, one says *tumi*. But the familiar form, *tui*, is used only when speaking to juniors or servants. Had the Master knowingly addressed Holy Mother in this manner it would have been considered disrespectful.

The Yoga of Divine Love

Dr K V Raghupathi

ALMOST ALL RELIGIONS acknowledge the existence of a supreme power greater than our limited mortal selves and affirm that there is an immeasurable gulf between that supreme power and the worshipper. But the yogi bridges this gulf, for one of the meanings of 'yoga' is union. The yogi attains that sublime union with the Supreme through jnana, knowledge; karma, work; and bhakti, devotional worship. The practices of yoga slowly develop into the intimacy of love, and the consummation of love is union with the Beloved.

Although bhakti is conceived in various ways and taught variously by great saints and sages, a systematic conception is found to be lacking in modern spiritual parlance. Sri Aurobindo, in his beautiful work *The Synthesis of Yoga*, has attempted to present bhakti's full implications in a lucid way. The present paper presents his idea and view of bhakti.

Stages of Perfect Union

Will, knowledge, and love are the three means by which a sadhaka can rise to the Divine. The harmonization of them is the foundation of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga. Love is the crowning glory of all beings. Without love, which is really the power of the Divine, one cannot reach the depth of richness and fullness of peace. Love leads and ultimately joins the lover with the Beloved.

Love and knowledge are not two different powers: 'Love fulfilled does not exclude knowledge, but itself brings knowledge; and the completer the knowledge, the richer the possibility

of love. ... Love without knowledge is passionate and intense, but blind, crude, often a dangerous thing, a great power, but also a stumbling block; ... but love leading to perfect knowledge brings the infinite and absolute union.'¹

In bhakti there is a distinction between the jiva and the Divine, the lover and the Beloved. A bhakta seeks to know and love a personal God. But there is a higher, or the highest, form of bhakti, in which oneness with the Impersonal is sought. The Impersonal is unknown but not unknowable; hence the bhakta always seeks it first through the personal God. In the final stages the bhakta finds that the personal God and the Impersonal are but one.

Worship is the first step in bhakti. And worship is of two kinds: external and internal. Real bhakti begins only when external worship changes into constant inner adoration, deepening into the intensity of divine love.

The Bhagavadgita distinguishes between three initial kinds of bhakti: (i) That which seeks refuge in the Divine from the sorrows of the world, *artah*; (ii) that which approaches the Divine as the giver of its good, *artharthi*; and (iii) that which yearns to know the unknown Divine, *jijnasu*. The scripture says the touchstone of real bhakti is found in the fourth, the *jnani*, person of knowledge.² We must move from the motivated and self-interested worship into the principle of motiveless and pure love. 'We have to', Sri Aurobindo says, 'throw away the props of our weakness, the motives of the ego, the lures of our lower nature before we can deserve the divine union.'³



OIL PAINTING BY P PURUSHOTHAM KARANT / RAMAKRISHNA MATH, HYDERABAD

Sri Aurobindo's concept of bhakti contains four assumptions. First, we must assume that the supreme existence is not an abstraction but a conscious Being. Second, this Being is immanent and meets us in the universe. Third, it is capable of a personal relation with us and must therefore have a personality. Fourth, when we approach it we receive a response in kind.

From Fear to Love

In certain religions love is based on the element of fear. The sentiment of fear-love is consistent with devotion but only up to a certain point. In many of the primitive popular religions this fear-love is the main aspect of religion. It is based on the perception of powers greater than that of humans, which seemed to strike people down for

some actions that displease these powers. Fear of the gods rises from ignorance of God and the divine laws that govern the world. It emphasizes the sense of sin and punishment. But Sri Aurobindo calls such ideas ‘a childish religious belief’ (563). It prolongs and increases the soul’s fear, self-distrust, and weakness. It attaches the pursuit of virtue and the shunning of vice to the idea of reward and punishment. It creates hells and heavens and does not focus on the Divine. Real bhakti is inconsistent with fear!

Sri Aurobindo says that the moment we enter into the deeper spiritual meaning, the fear of God becomes superfluous and even impossible. Right action springs forth from this state, as it is more and more purified in terms of devotion. Indian spiritual literature laid stress not so much upon the quality of action to be done but upon the quality of the soul from which the action flows. Therefore, righteousness does not flow from the God-fearing person but from the purity, love, beneficence, truth, fearlessness, and harmlessness of the God lover.

Fear, according to Sri Aurobindo, enters into the human relation of master and servant. When pure love arises, the relation, as stated in the Gita, is that of love and seva, service. The bhakta is to be nothing more than the instrument of the Divine. The Divine is the friend, the guide, lover, the higher Self. Perfect love is inconsistent with the emotion of fear. ‘Fear sets always a barrier and a distance,’ says Sri Aurobindo, ‘even awe and reverence for the divine Power are a sign of distance and division and they disappear in the intimacy of union of love’ (566). Moreover, fear belongs to the person’s lower nature, to the lower self.

Prayer

Sri Aurobindo also discusses the efficacy and non-efficacy of prayer in relation to the pure love relation between the bhakta and the Divine. The

real bhakta does not come to the Divine to satisfy wants, needs, and desires. These kind of prayers are supposed to be ‘a thing irrational and necessarily superfluous and ineffective’ (566). Fulfilling individual desires is not and cannot be the true determining factor of the Divine. It is only a particular form of aspiration and faith. It should prepare the relation on the lower plane, but afterwards we should draw towards the spiritual truth that is behind it. Prayer in the initial stages is a great power, but in the end it should cease and be replaced by the greatest thing: love for love’s sake. Prayers prepare us for the highest, motiveless, fearless devotion in which divine love is pure and simple without any demand or longing.

Sri Aurobindo also distinguishes three kinds of relations between the Divine and the bhakta: the divine Father, the divine Mother, and that of the divine Friend, each symbolizing help, protection, and guidance respectively. He says that the relation of fatherhood is always less close, while that of friendship admits of equality and intimacy. But still closer and more intimate is the relation of the mother and the child, and therefore such a relationship plays a large role wherever the religious impulse is most fervent and rich.

However, for Sri Aurobindo the highest relation of bhakti is that which is of the very essence of yoga, issuing forth from the nature of love itself—it is the passion of the lover for the Beloved. Here the one thing asked for is love, the one thing feared is the loss of love, and the one sorrow is the sorrow of separation from love. For the bhakta all love is indeed self-existent, because it springs from the secret oneness in the heart. Therefore, all other relations can arrive at their self-existent joy of Being for the sake of love alone. Here the beginning is love and the end is love too, the whole aim is love. Even the desire of possessions is overcome in the fullness of self-existent love, and the final demand of the bhakta is simply that

his bhakti may never cease or diminish.

For Sri Aurobindo love is a passion and it seeks two things: eternity and intensity. And in the relation of the lover and the Beloved the seeking for eternity and intensity is instructive and self-born. Love is a seeking for mutual possession, and it is here that the demand for mutual possession becomes absolute. Love too, Aurobindo says, is a yearning for beauty, but it is the joy of the All-beautiful.


Bhakti in itself is as wide and simple as the yearning of the soul for the Divine. It cannot therefore be fixed to any systematic method, but Sri Aurobindo identifies four successive stages in bhakti. The first stage is to emotionally turn towards adoration. In religion this adoration comes in the form of external worship, ceremonial worship. This form of adoration is necessary because most people live in their physical minds and cannot realize anything higher except by the force of physical symbols. As the aim of yoga as union dawns on the bhakta, adoration primarily becomes inner worship.

In the second stage, before adoration turns into an element of the deeper bhakti yoga, an increasing consecration of one's being is necessary. This consecration must be self-purifying to become fit for the divine contact. This purification may be ethical in character. But Sri Aurobindo insists that it will be like throwing away, a catharsis of all conflicting ideas of the Divine, whether the Divine is within, without, or everywhere. It culminates in a sort of liberation from the lower nature into a divine nature.

The third stage is sacrifice, in which the bhakta offers everything to the Divine. This sacrifice may take an ascetic form. The bhakta gives up all personal possessions and becomes a monk in his ecstatic bhakti; gives up all actions except those that help maintain the communion with the Divine or other devotees.

The fourth stage is the more intimate yoga, which is attained only by the intensity of longing without any process or method. This comes from the maturity, Sri Aurobindo says, of the preceding three stages as a leaf and flower out of the seed. In this fourth stage all the many moods of love—such as the joy of musing and absorption, the delight of the meeting and fulfilment, the pain of separation, the wrath of love, the tears of longing, the increasing delight of reunion—become integral parts.

To sum up, in the Indian tradition bhakti is unique because it contains powerful forms, stages, and poetic symbols. The sheer outpouring of spiritual emotion in the form of bhajans is unparalleled in spiritual literature. The ecstatic dance is full of symbology conveying profound mystic meaning. The intensity of longing, which tends to express itself in shedding copious tears, is an expression of divine delight. The sorrow of separation, as that of the lover and the Beloved, is felt because the union with the Divine is still not attained.

These forms of bhakti, as viewed in its full meaning and understanding by Sri Aurobindo, are not yet complete and true. For him, the highest form of bhakti is not the union with the personal God but the union with the Impersonal. When bhakti turns to this state and a bhakta constantly lives in it, there is no more singing, dancing, outpourings, or pangs of separation. The bhakta in the final stage becomes silent, identified with the Divine silence and love, as this supreme yoga of love is beyond words and thoughts. 

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Thankfulness and Appreciation

Prof. Vijaya Kumar Murty

IN DISCUSSING THANKFULNESS and appreciation I am not going to take the very difficult approach of ‘praising the Lord’. If we want to praise the Lord, we should praise him for everything—failures, success, poverty, wealth, disease, health, grief, happiness, life, and death—which needs great spiritual maturity.

Life is a process of growth and learning. If we can take the position of students and learn from life, we can be immensely benefited. Learning makes one grow towards perfection. Such an attitude is applicable and relevant to everyone: theists, atheists, or agnostics.

Process of Learning

One can learn from everything and everyone provided one’s mind is open and creative. The Bhagavata interestingly relates how the Avadhuta, one who has attained the highest Truth, learnt from nature and became what he was. Sri Ramakrishna aphoristically states: ‘*Yavat bachi, tavat shikhi*; as long as I live, so long do I learn.’ And we see this principle perfectly demonstrated in his life: ‘One day I was coming from the pine-grove toward the Panchavati. A dog followed me. I stood still for a while near the Panchavati. The thought came to my mind that the Mother might say something to me through that dog.’¹ Sri Ramakrishna’s humility was charming because of the knowledge shining through his actions and words.

Swami Vivekananda, quoting from Manu, says: ‘Learn supreme knowledge with service even from the man of low birth; and even from the Chandala.’² The challenge for our minds is to be positive, receptive, and creative. This is where

thankfulness and appreciation towards the whole world is of great help. Of course, sometimes people say ‘thank you’ when they do not mean it, and hence they do not learn anything. It is seen that minds in which there is love and appreciation can learn quickly.

‘Appreciate’ means to be grateful and recognize the value of something. What we appreciate increases in value, which in turn benefits us because our minds become positive and receptive. A thankful and appreciative attitude influences our numerous daily interactions with a variety of people. We find people who smile and even speak politely but are unable or unwilling to communicate with others. The cause of all this is a negative estimation of others, rendering ineffective what they could have learnt.

We all have our idiosyncrasies and differences, but this is exactly what makes people unique and creates an opportunity to learn. There are no two similar things in this universe, but this staggering differentiation is tied to a basic unity. When we see mere differences, we see only the surface of things. We may have a preference for one thing over another for various reasons, but that does not detract us a bit from the beauty of the world. If we can understand this fundamental truth, our view of the world will never be the same again. Swamiji writes in his poem ‘The Cup’: ‘And in My universe hath measured place, / Take it. I do not bid you understand. / I bid you close your eyes to see My face’ (6.177).

The world is not made only of abstract principles and ideologies but of living beings. And living beings are a composite of so many qualities:

good, bad, and all the various grades in between. Saints and sinners, rich and poor, learned and ignorant—all have idiosyncrasies, which are simply a function of a dynamic body and mind. The core of every being, however, is the Reality, untouched by any shade of good or bad. We should not therefore be thrown off balance by external things, otherwise we miss something important.

One day Atul Babu (Girish Chandra Ghosh's brother) brought a friend with him to meet Swami Brahmanandaji. The friend had heard a lot about the spiritual greatness of Maharaj. Unfortunately, throughout the period Atul Babu and his friend were near Maharaj, he was speaking on light, humorous subjects. Atul Babu felt a bit embarrassed and also anxious, wondering what impression his friend would carry home. Anyway, when they were leaving, Maharaj casually mentioned to Atul Babu's friend, 'You see, occasionally we speak about religion also.' His friend later told Atul Babu, 'Today for the first time in my life I met a person who is filled with pure joy.' Maharaj carried that atmosphere with him wherever he was. This was his way. One could never know what his approach would be towards a newcomer.³

This requires us to practise *viveka*, discernment. Discernment is the ability to tease out the different strands that go to make a composite. The opposite of *viveka* is confusion, through which we lump everything together. What we want is the ability to separate the different strands and focus on what would be beneficial for us, with no value judgement about other things.

Learning Is an Intelligent Process

In trying to practise this kind of thankfulness and awareness, there are some dangers we should be aware of. Firstly, it does not mean that we become a doormat for everyone; secondly, it does not mean that we have to compromise our values or abandon reason. Sri Ramakrishna teaches us

through the parable of a snake, which nearly died in trying to practise ahimsa, non-violence, by mistaking it for spirituality. The guru then instructed the snake that it should not bite but it could hiss to protect itself.

An illumined teacher can help us go beyond our limitations. We see this in a highly developed form in Sri Ramakrishna's life. He had the ability to literally 'see' the potential of a person, and would hold that exalted image in front of the person and guide him or her accordingly. In his eyes that potential precluded him from condemning people for their present weaknesses. It did not prevent him, however, from helping them to correct those deficiencies, though the corrective was done in the light of this hopeful future. In 'My Master' Swamiji says: 'He [Sri Ramakrishna] criticised no one. For years I lived with that man, but never did I hear those lips utter one word of condemnation for any sect.'⁴

We, however, are not like Sri Ramakrishna, so the chances of our being able to give a different direction to someone's life, to help them go beyond their idiosyncrasies, is very limited. A better way is to pray quietly for them and speak positively and encouragingly. In his first meeting with Sri Ramakrishna, M said that people should be told that the clay image in the temple is not God, and while worshipping it they should have God in view and not the clay image. Sri Ramakrishna scolded him: 'That's the one hobby of you Calcutta people—giving lectures and bringing others to the light! Nobody ever stops to consider how to get the light himself. Who are you to teach others?'⁵

There is a story of a priest in a temple who tended to be very grouchy. He would scowl at the devotees, and it became so bad that people started complaining. One day a devotee instead of complaining went up to him and said: 'You look so nice when you smile.' That actually brought a

smile to his face. On the other hand, if she had gone and lectured him on the importance of not being grouchy in a place of worship, it is not clear what the reaction would have been. But we can assume that it would have been negative.

Another parable of Sri Ramakrishna is the one that discerns between the '*hati* Narayana and mahout Narayana.' The maddened *hati*, elephant, is a manifestation of Narayana, and so is the mahout, rider, who tells pedestrians to get out of the elephant's path! We must heed the latter's words. Spiritual life does not contradict our intelligence or reason but fulfils them. If we remember this, we will not be in danger when we try to be appreciative and thankful.

Appreciating Ourselves

According to Vedanta psychology, what we see outside is but a reflection of what is within. Negative attitudes projected outside arise from negative attitudes in ourselves. Appreciation of externals has to be rooted in an appreciation of ourselves. Moreover, this has to be based not on comparison but on understanding and appreciation of the way things are. Emerson writes: 'There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better, for worse, as his portion; that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till.'⁶

We have to be first comfortable with ourselves, then only that which we struggle and work for will be ours. To be comfortable with ourselves does not mean that we think everything is okay and there is nothing to do. It means that the basis of the appreciation of ourselves lies deeper than our thoughts and actions. Our body and thoughts are constantly changing, but we are greater than both, for we are the embodiments of the spirit.

Even if we do not want to use the word 'spirit', common experience tells us that individuals are greater than the sum of their thoughts and actions. When parents love their children, it is not on the basis of their children's achievements; they love them just for being who they are. We can use the word 'love' instead. When we are conscious of the love that is within us, the love that we express to others and others express to us, we find ourselves very comfortable. If we identify ourselves with our thoughts and actions, there is a lot to correct. At first, as we begin examining ourselves, we may feel a little despondent, more negative than positive. But no case is hopeless, nor is it ever too late.

In the process of spiritual growth, we cannot give up or allow ourselves to become despondent. It is not only spiritual growth but growth in general. There is a saying: the journey of a thousand miles begins with a step. With each step we move towards the goal. And even in the journey there may be setbacks, backslidings, and stumbles. Swamiji reminds us that the sign of greatness is not that we never fall down, but that we get up each time and continue marching.

It is very important to understand that the appreciation of ourselves should not be done on the basis of comparison or achievements. If we compare ourselves with others, we will always feel unsatisfied. There is the story of a person who felt he had an inferiority complex. He went to see a psychiatrist and the patient related everything about himself. The psychiatrist listened and then finally said: 'I am happy to tell you that you do not have an inferiority complex. You are simply inferior!'

Internalizing Learning

There will always be some who are better than us and some who are not as good as us. Still each one has a role in the world and a contribution

to make. This idea is beautifully depicted by the young Nachiketa in the *Katha Upanishad*: 'Among many I rank as belonging to the highest; among many I rank as belonging to the middling.'⁷ And with that *shraddha*, faith, he went forwards to realize his goal of knowing the secret of death. We must know where we stand and have *shraddha* to push ahead. We should not whitewash our weaknesses and pretend they do not exist.

Faith in oneself is a keynote of Swamiji's message: 'To preach the doctrine of Shraddha or genuine faith is the mission of my life. Let me repeat to you that this faith is one of the potent factors of humanity and of all religions. First, have faith in yourselves.'⁸ The Bhagavad-gita teaches: 'One should save oneself by oneself; one should not lower oneself. For one is verily one's own friend; one is verily one's own enemy.'⁹

One should appreciate others as well as oneself. A person who has faith in himself or herself will also have faith in others. A person who is truly strong will have faith in the strength of others. When we see a person who has self-confidence and strength but who does not have confidence in the strength of others, we have reason to be suspicious. Underlying this apparent strength there may be a serious weakness, and without uncovering it that individual cannot progress and grow.

We are in a symbiotic relationship with the world: we affect the world and the world affects us. Our attitudes about the world and ourselves have to be related. One who is too critical of the world is probably too critical of oneself as well. It is a myth to think that denouncing someone or something will edify us. When we read the lives of the great spiritual giants, we find them to be wonderfully compassionate and understanding.

Let us explore this psychology a little more, which will take away our accusing finger and

eventually point it back at us. Sri Sarada Devi taught: 'If you want peace ... don't find faults with others but find fault rather with yourself. Learn to make the world your own. Nobody is a stranger, my dear. The world is yours.'¹⁰ The psychology behind this is explained by Sri Ramakrishna when he compares the mind to a white cloth, which takes the colour of whatever dye it is dipped into. The cloth is our mind and the dye is the set of thoughts we entertain. If we dwell on the negative, the mind becomes coloured with that negativity. If we enumerate the faults of others, what we are doing is dyeing our mind in the colour of those faults. In other words, we are taking on the nature of what we are condemning. Swami Sarvagatananda used to say: 'There is dirt on the road; so why should you pick it up and put it into your pocket?'

If we dwell on the positive, our minds become positive. This is why we seek holy company. The holiness that we see begins to get reflected in us. There is a beautiful teaching in the *Mundaka Upanishad* of two birds perched on a tree. One bird sits on the top, calm and resplendent, while the other restless bird is on the lower branches. The latter eats sweet and bitter fruits. Occasionally, when it bites into a bitter fruit, it looks up at the peaceful and luminous bird that does not eat anything. Being attracted it comes closer, but is then again distracted by the fruits. In this way, coming closer and closer it finds at a certain point that the rays of light surrounding the calm bird start to be reflected on it as well.¹¹

Rationale of Being Thankful

Many times we do not know how to deal with the dangers posed by our ego. It is almost impossible to get rid of it, but one can 'ripen it', as Sri Ramakrishna says. One can broaden and divinize it, and then it becomes harmless.


The study and practice of Vedanta forces us to grow. Growth is always a challenge. If we are not ready for the struggle, then we will find ourselves always defeated. This will result in irascibility and seeing things and people in a negative light. The problem is that we are not able to deal with the changes in ourselves. When we feel such things happening, it is good to take a step back and slow the pace a little bit until we reach a comfort level. There is no point in rushing forwards at a pace that we cannot sustain or feel comfortable with. In fact, gradual changes constantly occur within us, we just need to be alert and mindful. Being positive and non-complaining is a sadhana that can hasten our spiritual growth.

It all sounds quite obvious, in theory, but in practice all of this may not be so clear. We may not even be aware of what kind of thoughts we are collecting in our mind. This is why we require introspection and contemplation. And we need a constant alertness and mindfulness. Alert mindfulness is our best guide. And we need to think before we act, 'where does this lead me? What are the consequences?'

All of this discussion finally brings us to spiritual appreciation. The *Isha Upanishad* says that the Divine is present in every aspect of existence: 'Om. All this—whatsoever moves on the earth—should be covered by the Lord.'¹² The Brahman of Vedanta is not unrelated to our existence or experience, nor is it an extra-cosmic God. It is Being, Consciousness, and Love. When this Reality is seen through the mind and senses, it appears as the world. When we transcend the mind and the senses, as saints and sages throughout the ages have done, this very world is seen as divine.

But even if we have not reached this level of experience, if we can achieve some sort of intellectual conviction, we can take it as a

philosophical basis for the way we look at things, people, and ourselves. The Gita expresses this in the following way: 'Whatever object is verily endowed with majesty, possessed of prosperity, or is energetic, you know for certain each of them as having a part of my power as its source.'¹³ God is present not only where there is intelligence but also where there is stupidity; not only where there is wealth but where there is poverty too; not only where there is health but also where there is disease. Swamiji takes it further: 'And above all, my God the poor, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.'¹⁴

Seen in this light, it is not a matter of being compassionate to living beings, but worshipping all as the Divine through service. This service has the tremendous consequence of deifying everything. Acknowledging and serving the underlying divinity in everything is the real basis of thankfulness and appreciation. 

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4. *Complete Works*, 4.178.
5. *Gospel*, 80.
6. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays and Lectures* (Digireads.com, 2010), 133.
7. *Katha Upanishad*, 1.1.5.
8. *Complete Works*, 3.444.
9. *Bhagavadgita*, 6.5.
10. Swami Gambhirananda, *Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi* (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2004), 519.
11. See *Mundaka Upanishad*, 3.1.1-2.
12. *Isha Upanishad*, 1.
13. *Bhagavadgita*, 10.41.
14. *Complete Works*, 5.137.



The Discussion of Evil in Christianity

Subhasis Chattopadhyay

THE DISCOURSE ON EVIL as a personal external force was brought to public attention by the blockbuster movie *The Exorcist*, based on William Peter Blatty's novel of the same name. This was preceded by cult movies like *Rosemary's Baby* and followed by the series of films starting with *The Omen*. Then we had the low-budget international sensation *The Blair Witch Project*, after which came the *Amityville Horror*. All these movies have their origins within Christian traditions. The Judaeo-Christian continuum had seriously engaged with the problem of evil and continues to do so. Therefore, it is important to precede the discussion on evil by first recapitulating how Western theologians see the problem as affecting their theologies and even culture.¹

Defining the Problem

What is this 'evil' according to Western metaphysicians? One of the definitions is provided by William Rowe, who is an avowed atheist: 'In some distant forest lightning strikes a dead tree, resulting in a forest fire. In the fire a fawn is trapped, horribly burned, and lies in terrible

agony for several days before death relieves its suffering.'² How does it serve anyone's purpose, not to speak of a loving God, that a deer somewhere dies in agony? Is God then a sadist? This is the question that has tormented Western theologians for centuries.

Biblical scholars dealing with the concept of Satan see the construction of the identity of Satan as tripartite: (i) The Jews, while moving from Egypt to Canaan, appropriated the idea of a malevolent external force through their interaction with the remnants of the Assyrian and the Hittite peoples they met en route to the Promised Land; (ii) Satan is a construct of the various councils that settled the Biblical canon within the Catholic Church; (iii) lastly, those who study the last book of the Bible, *The Book of Revelation*, see Satan more as a cultural construct and certainly compare Satan with tyrants who persecuted the first Christians. Therefore, academics within the Christian tradition have little consensus among themselves about the reality of Satan, the eternal nature of hell, and even of God being anything but love.

This heteroglossia about why evil exists is seen in some of the most prominent Christian philosophers. St Irenaeus (130–202), for example, anticipates the Jesuit archaeologist Father Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955), in seeing evil as necessary for human perfection. Irenaeus sees evil as a part of the process of becoming perfect; de Chardin sees everything rushing to the Omega point, which for him is Jesus, and the existence of evil provides an opportunity for the human person to perfect herself or himself. Thus, Process theologians like the Salesian Father Roger Burggraeve see evil today, in the ‘here and now’, as part of God’s original design for creation and, in short, necessary. Process Theology, therefore, fits within the narrative of Western philosophy at large: the culmination of which is in the works of Martin Heidegger.³ Heidegger posits, in his magnum opus *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*), the phenomenological trope of interiority, with the caveat that this interiority is firmly rooted within time: Dasein.⁴ Process Theology sees Dasein as contingent, that is, this being in time—a time that God informs and dialectically forces towards the teleology of *parousia*, presence—has an authentic freedom to choose the ethical life over the life where something of value is *not* foregone. This line of thought connects with Plato’s *Timaeus*, in which we find a reference relevant to our discussion. Timaeus tells Socrates that ‘creations are indissoluble’, yet ‘all that is bound may be undone, but only an evil being would wish to undo that which is harmonious and happy.’⁵ It is as if there is some ‘alterity’⁶ within creation that resists all stability and goodness. Influenced by Plato, Emmanuel Lévinas (1906–95) said that people will see evil as ‘a datum in consciousness’, a certain ‘psychological content’, similar to the lived experience of colour, sound, contact, or any other sensation. But in this very ‘content’ there is an ‘in-spite-of-consciousness, the unassumable.’⁷

Lévinas sees evil as a means to embrace the otherwise inhospitable ‘other’. We now see the continuity and miscibility of Western philosophy and theology till our times.

St Augustine of Hippo (354–430) is more acceptable to Protestant theologians, since his main contention is that evil is a privation of the good. This is exactly what the Swiss Protestant theologian Karl Barth has termed as *Das Nichtige*; Barth sees evil as ‘an alien factor’ that is

not comprehended by God’s providence ... and which is not therefore preserved, accompanied, nor ruled by the almighty action of God like creaturely occurrence. It is an element to which God denies the benefit of His preservation, occurrence and rule, of His fatherly lordship and which is itself opposed to being preserved, accompanied and ruled in any sense, fatherly or otherwise. ... This opposition and resistance, this stubborn element and alien factor, may be provisionally defined as nothingness.⁸

Reading of ‘Evil’

Mordecai M Kaplan (1881–1983), christened the founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, had rightly questioned existing theodicies and the very omnipotence of a God, who requires human defence in the face of insurmountable evils. Kaplan observes:


None of the theodicies has ever proved convincing. The very idea of a God requiring justification is self-contradictory. The argument that whatever may appear evil to us may, from an objective standpoint, be good is just so much wasted breath, because to the extent that anything is evil, even if it be mistakenly regarded as such, it is evil and nothing else. That it is a means to the good, or that objectively considered it is no longer evil, in no way detracts from the fact that, according to the traditional theologies, it is necessary to conceive God as having to make use of means that are evil and

being the author of experiences that are subjectively not good.⁹

Kaplan's importance in our understanding of the problem of evil becomes relevant when we consider his abiding contribution to Judaic theodicy, the basis for contemporary Western reflections on theodicy. His difference from other philosophers and theologians lies in his frank secular scepticism and utter distrust of established theodicies. Kaplan would influence another Jewish commentator, Hannah Arendt (1906–75), the famous political scientist of the Holocaust, to see evil as something banal possessing nothing demonic and which fungus-like parasitically preys over everything alive. Arendt comes closest at defining evil for what it is; it just is, and the fact that it cannot be grasped with the help of contemporary hermeneutics makes it all the more frightening. Evil is an existential reality that truly defeats all social sciences and metaphysical analyses. In the face of such disparate views of what constitutes evil, we can only gesture at its true nature through allegories, metaphors, and symbols.

One certainty though evolves through our engagement with evil. The discourse of evil has to be necessarily different from the discourse of the good. This was a fact comprehended easily by the ancients. Lactantius, the third century North African Latin speaking Christian convert, apologist, and rhetorician, stresses the need for the construction of a unique vocabulary of evil and suffering since according to him vices are opposed to virtue, and thus their whole explanation must of necessity be different and opposite.

As the discourses and debates on the problem of evil continue—whether it is personal, subjective, objective, necessary for perfection, a part of creation, or God's will—ideas regarding evil are changing according to the evolution of human consciousness. The eternal opposition

between good and evil is a fact, and we know that ignorance, desires, and selfishness help increase evil. Therefore, one position to take is the one presented by Swami Vivekananda: 'Activity always means resistance. Resist all evils, mental and physical; and when you have succeeded in resisting, then will calmness come.'¹⁰ 

Notes and References

1. It is acknowledged that culture is produced by popular art forms like the cult movies mentioned in this essay. For instance, the increase of Ouija boards sales after audiences were exposed to *The Exorcist* show how the popular imagination took a morbid turn.
2. William L Rowe, 'The Problem of Evil and some Varieties of Atheism', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 16/4 (October 1979), 337.
3. See Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *What is Process Theology?*, <http://processandfaith.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/What_Is_Process_Theology.pdf> accessed 10 July 2013.
4. 'Dasein' cannot be really translated. It is a term loaded with the burden of history and entraps the philosophy of humanity from disparate thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, Emmanuel Kant, Nietzsche, Edmund Husserl, and Martin Buber. It is ordinarily spoken of as 'existence or determinate being' in Hegelian philosophy and 'human existence' in Existentialism.
5. Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Rockville: Serenity, 2009), 122.
6. The concept of 'alterity' derives from Lévinas and the work of his mature years—see Emmanuel Lévinas, *Alterity and Transcendence* (New York: Columbia University, 1999).
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Eternal Words

Swami Adbhutananda

Compiled by Swami Siddhananda; translated by Swami Sarvadevananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

THIS IS MY ONLY DESIRE: may I have the company of devotees and the company of sadhus life after life. By God's grace everything is going on well with me. Do I have a wife and children that I must feed them? Those who help me will also be blessed, because service to a sadhu and service to devotees is being done. I will also be equally blessed.

You can stay as long as you wish. Don't be shy with me or hesitant. You will later suffer if you do not speak your mind. But I will warn you boys not to spend money wastefully. The householders earn money by sweating their blood. One should never spend that money carelessly. That will bring harm. In the Master's eyes you will be committing an offence. He didn't like all that. Moreover, there is absolutely no certainty of the householders. One month they may have helped but in another they did not. That is why one must spend cautiously. I shall have to stay for a few days in Kashi. I tell these boys that you are all young and can go wherever you wish, but I will not be able to do that. That is why I move around with care and not for any other reason.

It is simply a folly to say that you possess 'firm conviction'. Bhishma alone could speak of 'firm conviction'. My dear, can everyone be a Bhishma? There was only one such as he. He was celibate from childhood. What great renunciation! Such a one is not found anywhere. If one has unbroken brahmacharya, then only does such firm conviction come.

See, now you are living like a king. Wherever you go, by taking the name of the Master and Swamiji, at that very place you receive great affection and hospitality. What can you understand about the suffering we endured? By the grace of Swamiji there is now no dearth of coarse rice and cloth; nor ever again will such lack arise, provided you lead your lives according to his instructions. Whoever follows the instructions of the Master and Swamiji will surely be benefitted. The Master proclaimed the religion for this age; Swamiji preached it. They are the ideals of this age.

With tears in his eyes, Chaitanya deva offered oblation to his forefathers at Gaya. See what great devotion he had for his father! Whoever becomes an ideal, every bit of him is ideal.

The Master said to Maharshi Devendranath: 'You are not the Janaka of the Treta Yuga, you are the Janaka of the Kali Yuga.' He had so much wealth and was such a kingly person; yet he spent his entire life solely doing sadhana. Tell me, nowadays, how many can become like Maharshi? After the Master returned from pilgrimage, someone asked him: 'What kind of sadhus did you see in Kashi? How did you find Bhaskarananda Swami?' The Master said: 'He attained four annas [twenty-five per cent] of bliss. But Trailanga Swami, yes, he was full; there is no village [realm] beyond that. Trailanga and Vishwanath [Shiva] are one and the same. If one feeds Trailanga Swami it is the same as feeding Vishwanath. Trailanga Swami was staying

at Manikarnika. We went to see him. Motioning to Hriday, Trailanga Swami said: 'Dig three shovels full of earth and throw them into the Ganga.' Seeing Hriday hesitate I said: 'You rascal! Obey him. Otherwise, you will be instantly lost.' I was afraid lest he ask me to shovel the earth. My health was quite weak.'

Bharata was exceedingly joyful when he heard that Rama would be the king. He started distributing gifts and so on. When he heard that Rama had gone to the forest at Dasharatha's command, Bharata was deeply saddened. In that state he gave up bathing and eating. Dasharatha, on the other hand, was so incapable of withstanding separation from Rama that he gave up his body. Everyone came and brought Bharata to Ayodhya. Though they wanted to make him the king, in no way would he agree. After performing the final rites for his father, he went to the forest to search for Rama, and after a long time he found Rama at Chitrakut. He repeatedly begged Rama to return, but Rama would not by any means consent to disobey his father's command. There being nothing further he could do, Bharata begged Rama for his sandals, which he carried on his head all the way back, and placing them on the throne he held an umbrella over them, waved a fan, and performed many other rituals! There was no jealousy in his mind. Such an example of devotion has never been heard of before.

One has to accept Shankaracharya. The guru of Chaitanya deva is in the lineage of one of the *dashanamis* [ten orders of sannyasins]. Our Master's guru is also in the lineage of one of the ten. From the ten orders established by Shankaracharya many great souls have risen, and many are yet to come. For this reason one must accept Shankaracharya. He is everyone's teacher.

Is it so easy to get a Trailanga Swami? He became such by undertaking severe hardships.

Austerities are needed—severe austerities, only then can one become like him.

Ramchandra Datta offered all of his possessions to the Master. Because of him, the public celebration of the Master took place. Ram babu used to say: 'Of whatever he said, all of it is correct; nothing more can be said.' On the strength of this statement, he spent his life working like a slave. He was truthful and he had no addictions. The Master knew very well the rarity of such a person. Earning money laboriously he would feed people, arrange for kirtan, worship, and spiritual discourses—and he would become engrossed in such activities. He left behind nothing for his family. Others only try to earn money to feed their relations, and they save it in order to live in comfort and joy. But Ram babu had no such inclinations. He derived great joy keeping busy with devotees and with God. He always repeated that instruction of the Master: 'A devotee's money should be like flowing water—coming from this side and going the other—there is no accumulation.' I observed this as well in Ram babu's life. Such a religious person is rarely found.

Ram babu brought Swamiji to the Master. Swamiji used to frequent the Brahmo Samaj. One day Ram babu took Swamiji along with him to the Master. Seeing Swamiji the Master entered into ecstasy. Afterwards he said: 'Please come again.' In this manner Swamiji's mind was made up.

It requires tremendous valour to lead a life filled with purity while living in the world. The Master used to tell Ram babu: 'Ram, this family of yours is not yours—it belongs to me.' Moreover he used to say: 'Ram is an endearing child; he is not impulsive. His heart sincerely weeps for God.' Whether I get joy or sorrow, I must attain God—this was Ram babu's attitude.

People give each other grief; they don't understand that one day they will have to get

old and die. See this once, the play of maya! A person forgets he will have to die some day; that is why he performs such mean acts. One who realizes that he or she too will have to die and that all these things are merely the play of a few days' time can never commit such wicked deeds. Rather one thinks: 'Why should I create any discord? For as many days as I shall live, it will be far better to spend them in peace and honest living. By his grace, if I pass my days beneficially, I will be freed.'

If everyone became monks, then who would become householders? It is not easy to become a monk. Out of lakhs and lakhs of householders, only one becomes a monk. One cannot become a monk simply by donning the ochre robe. One must have earnest detachment, self-control, renunciation, and austerity—then alone can one become a monk. Similarly, it is difficult to be an ideal householder. One does not become an ideal householder by marrying, having many children, and earning lots of money. In spite of having such wealth, prosperity, and children, only that householder who has no interest in such things but is restless for God is a true householder. A householder who is honest, calm, and has a thirst for knowledge is an ideal householder. An ideal householder and a genuine monk are one.

One hundred per cent renunciation for God is sannyasa. Such sayings are found in the Bhagavadgita. One cannot be a monk simply by wearing the ochre robe; much renunciation and austerity are required. You may say that we see so many monks; can they all have renounced one hundred per cent for God? No, they have not been able to, but they are trying to renounce everything and love him heart and soul. One can become an ideal monk in an instant if one has God's grace. And moreover, know that for those who take sannyasa with all

good intentions, even if nothing else happens for them, at least they will have tried to spend an honest life, not going about harming others. That itself is no ordinary thing.

One's youth is surely the proper time for devotion and sadhana. Don't spend this period in laziness; realize God by performing devotion and sadhana; be a man. If you cannot do devotion and sadhana, then do some noble work. Don't harm anyone. Don't gossip. It would be better to sleep instead!

One whose nature is that of a sadhu can never bring unholy thoughts in his mind. Unholy tendencies do not ever arise in his mind. He has no desire to do anything secretive; whatever he does is open. He has a fearless heart. Like a lion he fears no one in the world. And why should he fear? He harms no one, engages in no gossip, and lives truthfully without any hypocrisy. What shall he fear?

Is it enough to become a father of a child? One has a tremendous responsibility until the son grows to maturity. Both the good and bad of one's son depend on the father. A son becomes bad on account of the father and mother's fault. Do they consider that? The child develops according to what it learns. For this reason the father and mother should be extremely cautious in all of their words and deeds. A son primarily imitates his father and mother. When he grows to maturity it is a great relief, for he alone will then take responsibility for his actions. The father and mother then do not have any responsibility. But how many people comprehend the enormity of their responsibility? They think it will suffice if by any means the child can get some food to eat and clothes to wear. If someone is merely human in form, does that make one human? Many demons and persons of beastly nature also have human forms. Rather than having ten demonic natured

children, it is far better to have a single child of good character. How is it ever the fault of the child? Only if one raises a child properly will it grow into a person of fine character. If parents wish to properly raise their children, they must first themselves become persons of character, only then it would be possible. Does such recognition of one's responsibility rise so easily? Much holy company is required, many ideal lives must be observed, and much effort must be expended; only then can this occur. One becomes a person when one has this awareness about responsibility.

Someone is worshipping my photograph. As if his failure to do so will keep me from going to

heaven! What good will come of worshipping my photograph? Worship the Master; that will insure one's welfare.

Trailanga Swami underwent so much severe austerity. What can you understand of that? Those who show love, respect, and devotion to him, and who worship him will surely receive a spiritual benefit. The Master used to say: 'Trailanga Swami is beyond everything. His body is like that of an ordinary human but his actions are not human. He has attained the Shiva nature. Vishwanath and Trailanga Swami are non-different.'

Master Mahashay [Mahendranath Gupta] was a great scholar. How many have been and still are benefiting from him? Many learn about the Master by reading *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Master Mahashay is approaching old age. Now, if by the Master's grace he stays well, it will be a relief for us all. The longer such people remain in this world, the better it is for the welfare of the world.

Holy people feel pain upon seeing the suffering of others. Moreover, if it is within their power, they try to remove the afflictions of others as much as they can. But dishonest people become joyous and laugh at the suffering of others saying that one is suffering because of bad karma. They do not think that one day they may also suffer likewise. Such are the attitudes of extremely mean-natured souls. The dharma of humankind is to try to remove the sufferings of others and to wish for their well-being. You will understand all of this by observing the lives of great souls.

Trailanga Swami



Avataras and great souls are the ideals for humankind. They show us by their actions how to attain the status of a human being; everyone will attain such a status by following their advice and observing their lives. Every living being has an ideal. By manifesting the ideal in their own lives and by giving us instruction, the great souls have shown us the way. Only one who observes their lives and follows all of their instructions will attain an ideal life. Other than this, what else will a person do by obtaining a human body? That is why I say that if, by the grace of God, you have received a human birth, build yourself in such a way that your life becomes fulfilled and that you may gain release from the cycle of birth and death.

You have studied in the school established by Vidyasagar. What more shall I say to you about him? People could not understand him during his lifetime. Everyone without exception used to consider him an atheist. But he worshipped God in his cosmic form. Also, one rarely sees such a compassionate person as he. He would help the poor orphaned children and helpless widows secretly so that no one could know about it. Such an egoless scholarly person, possessing so much wealth, so honoured and respected, yet he cared nothing for name and fame. He felt no pride for such things. People giving a little help to the poor and suffering will themselves shout: 'I have given this! I have given that! I gave so much to these people! I gave so much to those people!' Their feet don't even touch the ground owing to their egotism. Before giving any aid, they make a display to the whole world by beating the drums, announcing that they have offered help. But no such thing existed in Vidyasagar; he was a godly-natured man. The Master said: 'He will be born with much greater power in the next birth.'

A woman who practises dharma is calm and

removes the suffering of the lowly and afflicted. She is honest. That woman is verily a goddess and an object of worship. Such divinely-natured women receive praise from all. They never mesmerize anyone with maya.

Verily, spiritual practice is sannyasa. Receiving sannyasa, if one does not perform spiritual practices, it is utterly futile. A sannyasin must perform such acts that will bring him joy and welfare to many. The very life of a monk is for the welfare of all. There should be no trace of ego or pride in him. One cannot be of any benefit if one possesses egoistic and prideful attitudes. It is a very difficult undertaking. No one can attain the genuine life of a monk without God's grace.

Doing good to others is itself dharma. The one who does that is truly spiritual. He alone is true who does not forget the benevolence that has been bestowed upon him. In this world suffering and bereavement are going on every moment. If people do not help each other, how will they survive? To help each other and to try to remove the sufferings of others is the dharma of human beings. Those who do not abide by this rule are low and beastly. Some people are very selfish. When they are suffering and in need, with the hope of getting help, they beg for help by making a show of meekness and humility. But as soon as the need is met, they do not even look back. See what a mean nature! They do not know that such suffering may return, such needs may arise again, and that at such time they will not receive any more help. Not only that, having cheated others in this manner once, people will not believe them the next time or come forward to give them any help. The one who forgets the benevolence of others will go on suffering endlessly. Neither in this life nor in the afterlife is there any hope for him.

(To be continued)

Svarajya Siddhih: Attaining Self-dominion

Gangadharendra Saraswati

Translated from Sanskrit and annotated by Swami Narasimhananda

(Continued from the July issue)

WHEN THE EQUILIBRIUM of the three *gunas* is disturbed by the process of creation, modifications like *mahat* take place. This is not created by *pradhāna* because it is not conscious and is incapable of creating the universe. It is not conscious itself and does not have any other conscious entity as its basis. It is normally seen in the world that inert things like clay and gold appear to be active by coming into contact with a conscious entity like the potter or the goldsmith. The potter rotates the potter's wheel and the clay appears to move. Similarly, the goldsmith melts the gold and it seems to move or flow. This semblance of activity is brought about by a conscious person, who is the basis of these actions. Seeing this, if we conclude that gold or clay have the power to move, it will be mere imagination.

Objection: On seeing its calf, milk oozes out from the udder of a cow, though the udder is not conscious. The water of water-bodies like rivers flows of its own for the welfare of the masses. Similarly, it can be held that though unconscious the *pradhāna* acts of its own for the enjoyment and liberation of the *puruṣa*.

Reply: No, that cannot be accepted. The milk of a cow oozes from its udder because of the conscious love of the cow for its calf and also because of the sucking of the udder by the calf, and the water of a river flows because of gravitation towards lower lands. In both the cases these activities come under the ambit of the omnipresent

Lord. This is what is mentioned in the scriptures and seen in reality.

Objection: *Sattva* is light and luminous. *Tamas* is heavy and has the characteristic of covering things. The flame of fire moves upwards because of *sattva*. Heavy things fall down due to *rajas*, which is also of the nature of motion and obstruction of motion. Because of its nature, *rajas* moves *sattva* and *tamas*. Similarly, *pradhāna* becomes active to accomplish a particular task.

Reply: No, that is not possible, because *pradhāna* cannot create the universe. Moreover, if it is active by its very nature, then there is no reason for it to stop its activity. We, however, do not see a continuous creation, and though *rajas* is of the nature of activity, to hold that there is beginning of activity every moment leads to denial of dissolution and also goes against the state of equilibrium of the three *gunas*.

Objection: The world is created according to the fruits of the actions of living beings. Living beings perform actions, and the results of actions performed in the previous creation have to be exhausted by facing their consequences. Also, the living beings create new results of actions in the present creation. The interval of waiting between the creation in which the actions are done and the creation in which their results are exhausted is called *pralaya*, dissolution. Since the fruits of the actions of living beings are incurred and exhausted in the creation, there is a valid reason for

the creation of the universe, while the action of *pradhāna* is self-evident.

Reply: Righteous and unrighteous actions performed in a previous creation and their results belong to an earlier creation and cannot be accounted for in a later creation. These results cannot be exhausted before the creation itself. If it is held that *pradhāna* acts only for the exhaustion of these results and creates the universe from *mahat* to the body of the living being, then the action of *pradhāna* would depend on the results of actions, which in turn would depend on the action of *pradhāna* in creating the universe. This leads to the defect of *anyonya-āśraya doṣa*, interdependence. Also, this will necessitate the positing of results of actions performed in earlier creations, which would lead to the problem of *anavasthā doṣa*, infinite regression. The actions in themselves are not conscious, and the accumulation or exhaustion of their results is not possible without an intelligent conscious principle as the basis. Without such an intelligent and conscious principle the interval of waiting before the next creation is also not plausible. All the preceding arguments given by the Sankhyans are for establishing the activity of *pradhāna* as the reason for all the actions of living beings. In reality, however, according to Sankhya, *puruṣa* is free and has no cause. The bondage brought about by unrighteous actions is removed by righteous actions, and the bondage brought about by righteous actions is removed by unrighteous actions; thus both happiness and misery are removed. Once the bondage is removed, *pradhāna*, by itself, indulges in creation. Just like it has been told by Patanjali: 'Good or bad deeds are not the direct causes of the transformation. They only act as breakers of the obstacles to natural evolution; just as a farmer breaks down the obstacles in a water course, so that water flows through by its own nature.'⁹⁵

Puruṣa is free from bondage and yet, how can there be the question of liberation? If it is held that *puruṣa* is bound by *prakṛti*, then it is the same as saying that the free Atman is bound, which is absurd. And if it is held that though *puruṣa* is free, it has to get liberation on coming in contact with *prakṛti*, then it is as good as saying that all and sundry should get liberation irrespective of whether they are bound or not, which again is absurd. And if it is said that *puruṣa* should be liberated because it is the rational path to take, then it would mean that the already free *puruṣa* should be freed, which is meaningless. It is also said: 'The one (*puruṣa*) thinks "she has been seen by me" and therefore loses all interest; the other (*prakṛti*) thinks "I have been seen" and ceases to act further. Therefore, even if there still is connection, there is no motive for further evolution.'⁹⁶

Swami Vivekananda, while explaining the Sankhya philosophy, talks about the inadequacy of the theory of will in explaining the phenomena of the universe:

What makes nature (Prakriti) change? We see so far that everything, all Prakriti, is Jada, insentient. It is all compound and insentient. Wherever there is law, it is proof that the region of its play is insentient. Mind, intelligence, will, and everything else is insentient. But they are all reflecting the sentiency, the 'Chit' of some being who is beyond all this, whom the Sankhya philosophers call 'Purusha'. The Purusha is the unwitting cause of all the changes in the universe. That is to say, this Purusha, taking Him in the universal sense, is the God of the universe. It is said that the will of the Lord created the universe. It is very good as a common expression, but we see it cannot be true. How could it be will? Will is the third or fourth manifestation in nature. Many things exist before it, and what created them? Will is a compound, and everything that is a compound is a product of nature. Will, therefore, could not create nature. So, to say that the will of the Lord created the

universe is meaningless. Our will only covers a little portion of self-consciousness and moves our brain. It is not will that is working your body or that is working the universe. This body is being moved by a power of which will is only a manifestation in one part. Likewise in the universe there is will, but that is only one part of the universe. The whole of the universe is not guided by will; that is why we cannot explain it by the will theory. Suppose I take it for granted that it is will moving the body, then, when I find I cannot work it at will, I begin to fret and fume. It is my fault, because I had no right to take the will theory for granted. In the same way, if I take the universe and think it is will that moves it and find things which do not coincide, it is my fault. So the Purusha is not will; neither can it be intelligence, because intelligence itself is a compound. There cannot be any intelligence without some sort of matter corresponding to the brain. Wherever there is intelligence, there must be something akin to that matter which we call brain which becomes lumped together into a particular form and serves the purpose of the brain. Wherever there is intelligence, there must be that matter in some form or other. But intelligence itself is a compound. What then is this Purusha? It is neither intelligence nor will, but it is the cause of all these. It is its presence that sets them all going and combining. It does not mix with nature; it is not intelligence, or Mahat; but the Self, the pure, is Purusha. 'I am the witness, and through my witnessing, nature is producing all that is sentient and all that is insentient.'⁹⁷

Till now the view of Sankhya regarding the creation of the universe and the subsequent enjoyment and liberation has been discussed.

किञ्चाऽकर्तृव भोक्तृता यदि बत कृतहानाकृताभ्यागमः स्यात्
कीदृग्भोगोऽप्यसङ्गेऽनतिशयिनि भवेत्तेन भोग्यस्य कोऽर्थः
कीदृक्कस्याविवेकः कथमथ स भवेद् भोगहेतुर्विवेकः
कस्य स्यात्तेन किं स्यादिति हि विमृशतो दुर्वचं ब्रह्मणोऽपि

॥१८॥

Further, if the non-doer *puruṣa* is the enjoyer, then alas, the actions done (by *pradhāna*) become futile and the actions not done (by *puruṣa*) yield results. How can there be any enjoyment for *puruṣa* free from any attachment to the three *guṇas* and free from any excellence brought about by the three *guṇas*? What will be the benefit to *pradhāna* by such enjoyment of *puruṣa*? (If it is held that the ignorance of *pradhāna* and *puruṣa* is the reason for enjoyment, then we ask that) what kind of ignorance is this? Then, how does this ignorance become the cause of the enjoyment of *puruṣa*? Who has this ignorance? (If it is held that neither *puruṣa* nor *pradhāna* have this ignorance), then what is the use of their knowledge? Thus analysed, this (Sankhya philosophy of Kapila) cannot be established even by Hiranyagarbha.

There are many other errors in the school of Kapila, that is Sankhya. According to Kapila, doership is attributed to *pradhāna* and enjoyership is attributed to *puruṣa*. We are now analysing this stand. If the non-doer *puruṣa* becomes the enjoyer, then unfortunately there is a fallacy in this view of the actions of *pradhāna* not producing any results and the actions not done by *puruṣa* producing results. *Pradhāna* performs actions and does not face the results, whereas *puruṣa* does not perform any action and yet enjoys the fruits of actions performed by *pradhāna*. The actions of *pradhāna* become futile, as they do not produce any results. This is absurd. To avert this fallacy, if we hold that the results of the actions performed by one are enjoyed by another, then again it leads to another fallacy: that if Yajnadatta has eaten food, the hunger of Devadatta should be appeased. This again is absurd. Further, *puruṣa* is free from the effects of the three *guṇas* and also the results like excellence brought about by them. How can such a *puruṣa* enjoy the fruits of actions, whoever may be the performer of such

actions? The *guṇas* are essential to any enjoyment and also to the nature of enjoyment such as good or bad. When *puruṣa* is free from these very *guṇas*, how can it be the enjoyer? If for the sake of argument we accept that *puruṣa* is the enjoyer, then what is the use of such enjoyment to *pradhāna*? *Pradhāna* is inert matter and can have no idea of self-interest or utility. Even when a compassionate person helps the suffering, the help is done to remove the pain caused by seeing others' suffering. When an evil person causes harm to others, it is due to a sense of revenge or for getting pleasure from others' pain. Thus, it is empirically seen that all actions are performed with self-interest. Since *pradhāna* has no self-interest, its actions have no motive.

If it is held that *puruṣa* and *pradhāna* are mutually ignorant, this ignorance being the cause of the actions of *pradhāna*, then what kind of ignorance is this? If this ignorance is of the nature of absence, then there is a fallacy in Sankhya, which goes against the tenets of this philosophy. And if this ignorance is actually the knowledge of the unity of *puruṣa* and *pradhāna*, then that also is not possible, because completely different entities cannot be one. If you hold that the unity of *puruṣa* and *pradhāna* is false, then again it goes against the tenets of Sankhya philosophy, as Sankhya does not accept falsity. Further, is this ignorance that of *puruṣa* or of *pradhāna*? Ignorance cannot be of either of them, because the inert material *pradhāna* cannot be the locus of ignorance, and the unattached *puruṣa* cannot be the locus of ignorance either. Even if we were to accept this ignorance, how could it be the cause of the enjoyment of the unattached *puruṣa*? Further, to whom does the knowledge, which is held by Sankhya to be the cause of liberation, belong to? To *puruṣa* or *pradhāna*? It can belong to neither of them, as *puruṣa* is unattached and *pradhāna* is material. Also, what would be the result of such

knowledge, since *puruṣa* is unattached? Hence, even the knowledge of Sankhya is fruitless. If we analyse this philosophy in this manner, even Hiranyagarbha or Brahma would not be able to establish the philosophy of Kapila.

(To be continued)

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96. Ishvara Krishna, *Sāṅkhya Karikā*, 66.
97. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 2.450-1.

According to Kapila, there are many Purushas; not one, but an infinite number of them. You and I have each of us one, and so has everyone else; an infinite number of circles, each one infinite, running through this universe. The Purusha is neither mind nor matter, the reflex from it is all that we know. We are sure if it is omnipresent it has neither death nor birth. Nature is casting her shadow upon it, the shadow of birth and death, but it is by its nature pure. So far we have found the philosophy of the Sankhya wonderful. ...

But if we ask the Sankhya the question, 'Who created nature?'—the Sankhya says that the Purusha and the Prakriti are uncreate and omnipresent, and that of this Purusha there is an infinite number. We shall have to controvert these propositions, and find a better solution, and by so doing we shall come to Advaitism. Our first objection is, how can there be these two infinities? Then our argument will be that the Sankhya is not a perfect generalisation, and that we have not found in it a perfect solution. And then we shall see how the Vedantists grope out of all these difficulties and reach a perfect solution, and yet all the glory really belongs to the Sankhya. It is very easy to give a finishing touch to a building when it is constructed.

—*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 2.452-3

REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



***Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* of Nāgārjuna: The Philosophy of the Middle Way**

David J Kalupahana

Motilal Banarsidass, 41 U A Bungal-
low Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi
110 007. Website: www.mlb.com.
2012. xvi + 412 pp. ₹ 495.

This is the book's fifth reprint of the Indian edition, which was first published by the State University of New York in 1986. The author offers a new translation of and commentary on Nagarjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. Kalupahana's interpretation of Nagarjuna aspires to be a polemical corrective to what he calls the 'Vedantic interpretation' of Nagarjuna—upheld, he claims, by Chandrakirti and, more recently, by T R V Murti—which 'presents Nāgārjuna as a critical or analytical philosopher whose sole function [*sic*] was to criticize or analyse (*vigraha*) views presented by others without having to recognize or uphold a view of his own' (86). Against this 'Vedantic' reading, Kalupahana argues that Nagarjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* upholds the positive thesis of *pratityasamutpada*, dependent origination, as expounded especially in Buddha's *Kaccāyanagotta-sutta*. Kalupahana's interpretation of Nagarjuna is deflationary in that it rejects the widely held view that Nagarjuna introduced a radically new philosophical theory and method into Buddhist philosophical discourse. According to Kalupahana, Nagarjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* is merely 'a superb commentary on the Buddha's own *Kaccāyanagotta-sutta*' (5). On the basis of this reading Kalupahana arrives at the provocative conclusion that 'Nāgārjuna's philosophy is a mere restatement of the empiricist and pragmatic philosophy of the Buddha' (8).

Kalupahana's translation of the text is

reasonably competent, but he does sometimes suggest strained readings of certain key words and phrases from the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* in an attempt to tilt the text towards his own favoured 'pragmatic' interpretation of Nagarjuna's philosophy. To take just one example, Kalupahana's translation of the dedicatory verses to the text is highly implausible. He makes an unconvincing case that the various negative adjectives preceding the word *pratityasamutpadam* in the verses do not modify the word, but in fact refers to other positive doctrines of the Buddha! Unfortunately, Kalupahana's idiosyncratic reading of the dedicatory verses lacks textual support.

Kalupahana's empiricist interpretation of Nagarjuna is provocative and highly original, and it deserves to be engaged by scholars of Nagarjuna and Buddhist philosophy. His study, however, does have some serious drawbacks. First, the picture he paints of Nagarjuna as an empiricist philosopher who merely reiterates some of the fundamental teachings of Buddha is rather disappointing in the end, since it raises the question of why Nagarjuna played such a pivotal role in the history of Buddhist philosophical discourse. Second, Kalupahana's defence of his own unusual pragmatist interpretation of Nagarjuna remains incomplete at best, since he does not engage fully the vast commentarial literature on the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, which often presents views on Nagarjuna that are radically different from Kalupahana's. Third, the book is full of typos throughout, including many Sanskrit words. Kalupahana's reference to 'Māgārjuna' (ix), for instance, is sure to raise eyebrows. These typos are inexcusable on the part of the publisher as the book is now in its fifth edition.

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Thirty Minor Upanishads

Trans. K Narayanasvami Aiyar,
ed. Madhu Khanna

Tantra Foundation, Hari Bhari
Farm, New Delhi 110 074. 2011.
xxiii + 286 pp. ₹ 950.

The Upanishads form part of the world's great philosophical and literary heritage. For centuries this literature was almost unknown in the West till the beginning of the eighteenth century. It was Dara Shuko, the eldest son of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, who had the Upanishads first translated into Persian, with the assistance of the court pundits and maulvis. The prince, who had a noticeable mystical streak in him, was deeply interested in Sanskrit studies and the religious texts of the Hindus. These Persian translations were later rendered into Latin and other European languages.

Arthur Schopenhauer was amazed with the grandeur of Upanishadic thought and sublime philosophy, and so were other French, German, and English scholars. No wonder that today scholars and common people the world over find this genre of philosophical literature sustaining the eternal human quest to discover its real identity and ultimate destiny.

The book under review covers thirty minor Upanishads out of the extant hundred and eight. These thirty Upanishads, mostly from the Yajur Veda, were composed comparatively late in the Upanishadic age. They deal with the esoteric relationship of the jiva and Ishvara and the ways to worship the supreme Brahman.

The Adyar Library, Madras, had first published this book way back in 1914. This English translation by K Narayanasvami Aiyer has been revised and edited thoroughly by Madhu Khanna. The book is classified in five categories: Vedantic, physiological, mantra, sannyasa, and yoga. The classification facilitates an in-depth study of these texts. Some of the Upanishads also contain esoteric details that help in understanding later Shaiva and Shakta tantric literature.

There is continuity, from the earliest times, in the philosophical ideas that sustain the religious and philosophical life of India. However, there

were changes within that continuity compelling this literature to adapt itself to newer philosophical thoughts. Some of these texts reflect those changes, which occurred over the centuries, as they creatively absorbed the new thoughts and trends.

The selection of only thirty minor Upanishads might have been the need of the day while the first English translation went to press. It would have been better if some other minor Upanishads were translated and added to the edition.

The original translation has been critically revised and edited. But the volume does not carry the original Sanskrit texts. The editor is aware that mere translations, without the original Sanskrit text, may sometimes mislead readers. It is hoped that this drawback will be taken care of in a future edition.

A foreword by Dr Karan Singh opens the *Thirty Minor Upanishads*. It is followed by a scholarly introduction by Swami Veda Bharati, who very perceptively points out that if read in the right spirit, the truths of the Upanishads can change one's life.

Dr Narendranath B Patil

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Mumbai

BOOK RECEIVED



Verses of the Divine Spiritual Life (with explanation)

Swami Dayananda Giri Ji
Maharaj

G G Garg, 99 Preet Nagar, Ambala
City 134 003, Haryana. 2013. Part I,
x + 235 pp.; Part II, x + 279 pp. For
free distribution.

Swami Dayananda Giri Ji Maharaj (1919–2004) was an illumined saint saturated with God-consciousness. He inspired thousands of people towards spirituality. His profound silence was often punctuated with words of wisdom. These books are the result of notes taken down by devotees that gathered around him for peace and solace. The first part deals with conduct, and the second with meditation and worship.

REPORTS



Inauguration of the second floor of the Headquarters building



Headquarters

On 10 July 2013, the sacred Ratha Yatra day, Srmat Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the newly constructed northern wing on the second floor of the Headquarters building at Belur Math.

Commemoration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda

Srmat Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj inaugurated a special exhibition on Swami Vivekananda at the Ramakrishna Museum, **Belur Math**, on 10 July. On the same day Revered Maharaj released the book *A Bouquet of Swami Vivekananda's Writings* brought out by Belur Math through Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati. The book contains a good number of selections reproduced in facsimile from the original manuscripts of Swamiji's writings.

The following centres organized various programmes to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. **Bangalore:** Retreats for about 200 sweepers and 190 auto-rickshaw drivers on 29 and 30 June respectively. **Delhi:** The centre has taken up the construction of a night shelter for the homeless in Delhi. Smt Sheila Dikshit, chief minister of Delhi, laid the foundation stone for the building on 9 July. The ashrama conducted a programme of devotional songs on 21 July, attended by nearly 400 people.

Chennai Students' Home: Exhibition, cultural competitions, and lectures in June at three polytechnic colleges in Chennai, in which 2,500 students participated. **Gretz (France):** Interfaith meeting on 29 and 30 June, attended by about 150 people. Talks on Swamiji at two places on 9 June and 13 July. **Hyderabad:** A residential youth camp from 28 to 30 June, attended by 130 youths. **Institute of Culture, Kolkata:** Launched a web-portal on Swamiji <www.vivekanandaarchive.org> on 26 July. **Japan:** The centre organized the inaugural function of Swamiji's 150th birth anniversary celebration at the Indian Embassy's auditorium in Tokyo on 9 June. The Indian ambassador to Japan and several other dignitaries attended the programme comprising speeches and cultural events. The prime minister of Japan had sent a message for the occasion. **Jessore (Bangladesh):** Public meetings, addressed by Swami Suhitananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, and several other distinguished speakers, and devotional songs on 12 July, attended by a large number of people. **New York Vedanta Society (USA):** A booklet *Glimpses of Swamiji's Life in New York*, authored by Swami Tathagatananda, was released on 23 June. On 4 July a one-day retreat was held at Ridgley Manor, attended by about 150 devotees. **Raipur:** On the initiative of the centre an NGO organized a procession and a public meeting in the city on 7 July; around 3,000

school children dressed like Swamiji and Nivedita participated. The centre held a youth convention at Ghughuwa village, near Raipur, on 19 July, in which 590 youths took part. **Ranchi Morabadi:** District-level youth camps at Bokaro, Dhanbad, and Chatra districts in Jharkhand on 20 June, 5 and 25 July respectively, in which 1,016 youths participated. **Salem:** Value education programmes for parents in Namakkal district and Salem on 29 June and 13 July respectively; in all 122 parents attended the programmes. Discourses on Swamiji on 28, 29, and 30 June at the ashrama premises. **Swamiji's Ancestral House:** A programme comprising songs and narration on the Ramakrishna movement on 29 June, attended by about 400 persons. On the centre's initiative two educational institutions organized seminars on 19 and 20 July on the relevance of Swamiji's message in today's context. **Sylhet (Bangladesh):** A seminar on Swamiji, followed by musical performance, on 7 June, attended by 350 people.

New Mission Centre

A new branch centre of the Ramakrishna Mission has been started at 'Roy Villa' in **Darjeeling**, where Sister Nivedita stayed during her last days and passed away on 13 October 1911. The address of the centre is Ramakrishna Mission Nivedita Educational and Cultural Centre, Roy Villa, Lebong Cart Road, Darjeeling, West Bengal 734 104; email: rkmdarjeeling@gmail.com and rkmnecc@gmail.com.

News from Branch Centres

Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University, Belur, held its eighth foundation anniversary celebration and the annual convocation at its Belur campus on 4 July. Dr S Ayyappan, Director General, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, and Secretary, Department

of Agricultural Research and Education, Government of India, was the guest-in-chief and delivered the convocation address. Swami Suhitananda, who is also the chancellor of the university, presided over the meeting and awarded the certificates, degrees, and diplomas to the students who successfully graduated from the Belur and Narendrapur faculties of the university.

Swami Suhitananda inaugurated the newly constructed building for the medical unit at **Ramakrishna Math, Naora**, on 7 July.

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Puri, served lemonade and drinking water to about 25,000 pilgrims during the Ratha Yatra festival and treated 130 patients in the medical camp organized on this occasion. The centre also served lemonade to pedestrians throughout the summer.

Ramakrishna Mission, Viveknagar, organized a blood donation camp on 10 July, which was inaugurated by Sri Manik Sarkar, chief minister of Tripura. A total of 81 persons donated blood in the camp.

Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, conducted a month-long summer camp from 1 to 31 May for children in the age group 8–13, in which 312 children took part. The programme included chanting, yoga exercises, narration of the lives and teachings of the Holy Trio, classes on drawing, and other activities.

On the initiative of **Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, New York**, the Thousand Island Park Corporation dedicated in a special function, on 26 July, a bronze



Dedication of a bronze plaque at Thousand Island Park



plaque at the place in Thousand Island Park where Swamiji had landed in 1895. The memorial features Swamiji's picture and a brief description of his famous stay at that place.

Achievements

Kamalesh Ghosh, a higher secondary student of the school at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Midnapore**, achieved fifth rank in the West Bengal Joint Entrance Examination, 2013. Also, Anubhab Ghosh, a class-7 student of the school achieved first rank in the 12th National Cyber Olympiad conducted by Science Olympiad Foundation, Gurgaon, in which millions of students from more than 24,000 schools in 14 Asian countries appeared. The award, carrying a gold medal, a citation, an iPad, and a CD of an encyclopaedia was handed over at a function held in New Delhi on 16 June.


The junior football team (under 17 group) of the school at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narainpur**, won the state-level Subrata Cup Football Championship held at Dhamtari, Chhattisgarh, from 26 to 29 June.

Relief

Distress Relief • **Narottam Nagar** centre distributed 340 medicated mosquito nets to needy people of Soha village in the Deomali sub-division of Arunachal Pradesh and of Namsung Tea Estate in the Naharkatiya sub-division of Assam during the month of July. **Porbandar** centre distributed 258 sets of textbooks and 13,700 notebooks to needy students in July. **Ulsoor** centre distributed 101,000 notebooks, 2,000 slates, 15,000 pens, 17,000 pencils, 17,000 erasers, 17,000 pencil sharpeners, 6,000 geometry boxes, and 2,000 dictionaries among 16,392 needy students of 177 villages from 17 June to 12 July.

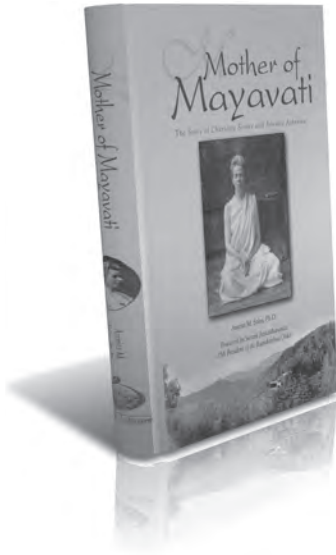
Drought Relief • In the wake of severe drought in certain parts of Karnataka and Maharashtra two centres supplied drinking water to affected families. **Shivanahalli**, 648,000 l to 11,780 people

in 9 villages of Malur Taluk in Kolar district from 27 June to 20 July; and **Aurangabad**, 124,000 l to 460 people in 12 villages of Aurangabad district from 28 to 30 June.

Flood Relief • **Kankhal** centre continued its relief operations among the victims of the flash-floods in Rudraprayag district, Uttarakhand. The centre distributed 24,100 kg rice, 10,700 kg flour, 5,360 kg dal, 9,500 kg potatoes, 4,550 kg salt, 4,332 kg soybean nuggets, 108 kg assorted spices, 2,140 kg milk powder, 758 kg sugar, 500 utensil sets (each set containing a bucket, a cooking vessel, a ladle, a griddle, bowl, tumbler, plate, and other items), 1,665 plates, 2,324 bowls, 2,324 tumblers, 820 pressure cookers, 1,665 griddles, 1,572 solar lanterns, 2,159 torches, 25,680 candles, 21,400 matchboxes, 2,324 saris, 2,983 dhosis, 4,648 blankets, 2,324 bedsheets, and 1,500 umbrellas among 5,504 families of 57 inaccessible villages in Rudraprayag, Sonprayag, Gup-takashi, and Ukhi Math areas from camps in Agastya Muni from 1 to 7 July, and Phata from 7 to 30 July. Besides, 1,389 flood-affected patients were treated at the medical camps established by the centre in Agastya Muni and Gup-takashi. The centre also arranged distribution of 220 kg chira, 120 kg gur, 100 utensil sets (each set containing 2 buckets, a ladle, a bowl, a tumbler, a plate, a dish, and a polythene sheet), and 100 blankets among 100 families belonging to a sweeper colony at Uttarakashi. **Dehradun** centre has started a relief camp at Joshi Math in Chamoli district. The centre distributed 8,450 kg rice, 8,450 kg flour, 2,967 kg dal, 690 kg potatoes, 690 kg onions, 1,686 l edible oil, 1,332 kg soybean nuggets, 132 kg assorted spices, 1,581 kg salt, 155 kg milk powder, 880 kg sugar, 690 kg gur, 244 kg tea, 3,005 candles, 1,302 packets of matchboxes, 50 utensil sets (each set containing a pressure cooker, a cooking vessel, a griddle, a tumbler, and 4 plates), and 1,622 blankets among 1,674 affected families in Pandukeshwar, Govindghat, and Niti blocks from 1 to 28 July. Following the recent devastating flood in north Bengal **Cooch Behar** centre served cooked food (khichuri) to 5,864 victims at 6 villages of Tufanganj sub-division in Cooch Behar district from 9 to 12 July. 

Mother of Mayavati

—Amrita M. Salm



Pages xxiv + 400 | Price ₹ 200
Packing & Postage: ₹ 50

It was Swami Vivekananda's dream to start a centre on the Himalayan heights. He wanted this centre to be dedicated to Advaita philosophy alone. In his vision, it was to be a centre where the East and the West would meet to give full and free expression to the Highest Truth of Non-dualism, without any of the weakening ingredients of the philosophy of the dualistic schools. His dream was actualized by a couple from England, Mr. and Mrs. Seviers, especially by the latter. After the founding of Mayavati Advaita Ashrama, soon Mr. Sevier passed away. Then it was Mrs. Sevier who, through her gritty determination and lofty character, built and consolidated the centre. In course of her amazing life there, she eventually emerged to become the 'Mother of Mayavati'.

Mother of Mayavati is the inspiring story of Mrs. Sevier's life—a life exemplifying complete dedication to the spiritual ideal, purity, and selfless love for all. And with her life-story is entwined the early stages of the history of Advaita Ashrama. The book contains also her letters and brilliant articles, and even important documents related to her and the centre. Forty-nine colourful pictures have also been included, further embellishing the beauty and worth of the book.

Patanjali Yoga Sutra— Hindi Audio DVD

—Swami Brahmeshananda

The common aim of Indian philosophies is to attain liberation. Yoga is a means of liberation. Patanjali Yoga Sutra is the seminal text on Yoga. Swami Brahmeshananda, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and a former editor of the English journal Vedanta Kesari, lucidly explains the sutra in detail.

This DVD is an attempt to bring out the practical aspects of the Yoga philosophy for the benefit of the listeners.



60 Hours | Price ₹ 100 | Packing & Postage: ₹ 55



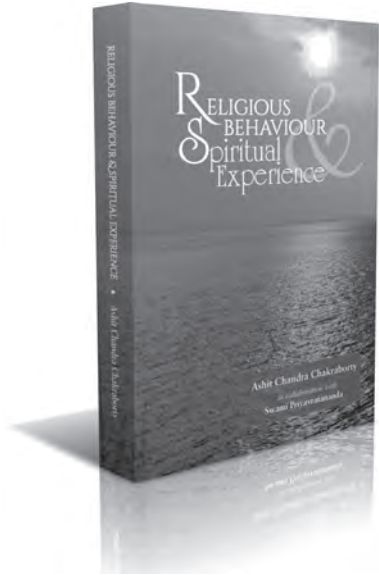
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Religious Behaviour & Spiritual Experience

—Asit Chandra Chakraborty
in collaboration with
Swami Priyavratana



The religious have always intrigued the lay. Spiritual life and experience eludes ordinary understanding or so it seems. Senses fail to fathom spiritual truths. Science seems to be at loggerheads with spirituality. Is there any meeting ground? Can spiritual truths be investigated by a scientific mind using scientific techniques? Why do people take to spiritual life? Is there any scientific truth behind supra-normal experiences? These and other questions have been explored in this book.

Pages 340 | Price ₹ 100 | Packing & Postage: ₹ 35

Vivekananda in Pictures

Photographs remind us of personalities. Prophets have a striking personality which is reflected to some extent in their images. We are fortunate that we have many photographs of Swami Vivekananda, through which we can get a glimpse of his magnetic bearing. All his original photographs are in black and white. We have digitally re-mastered some of these photographs into colour. We are happy to present them in this book and are sure that they will be received well by his admirers. This book is being published on the occasion of the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.



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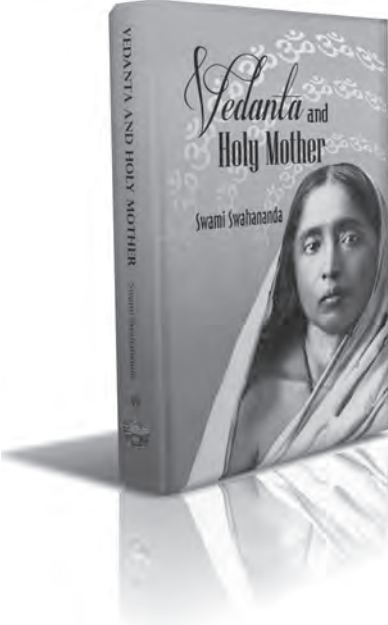
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Vedanta and Holy Mother

—Swami Swahananda



This book, 'Vedanta and Holy Mother', has been compiled mostly from published articles in journals and books. These are a collection of self contained articles and not a planned book. Those who are interested in a particular topic and not its entire philosophy or background may find these separate treatments more useful. These topics had been dealt with separately as lectures, essays, television talks and University lectures. There will be repetitions of ideas and language.

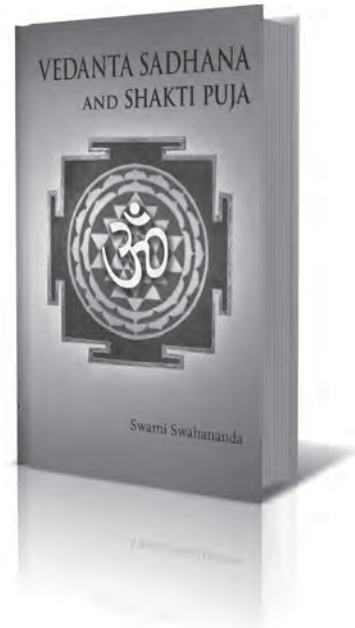
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Vedanta Sadhana and Shakti Puja

—Swami Swahananda

Swami Swahananda was a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and has spread the message of Vedanta in the west for many decades. This book is a collection of his writings and speeches compiled by his disciples and admirers. We are happy to bring this volume to the readers who will be benefited by the insight of the author.

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